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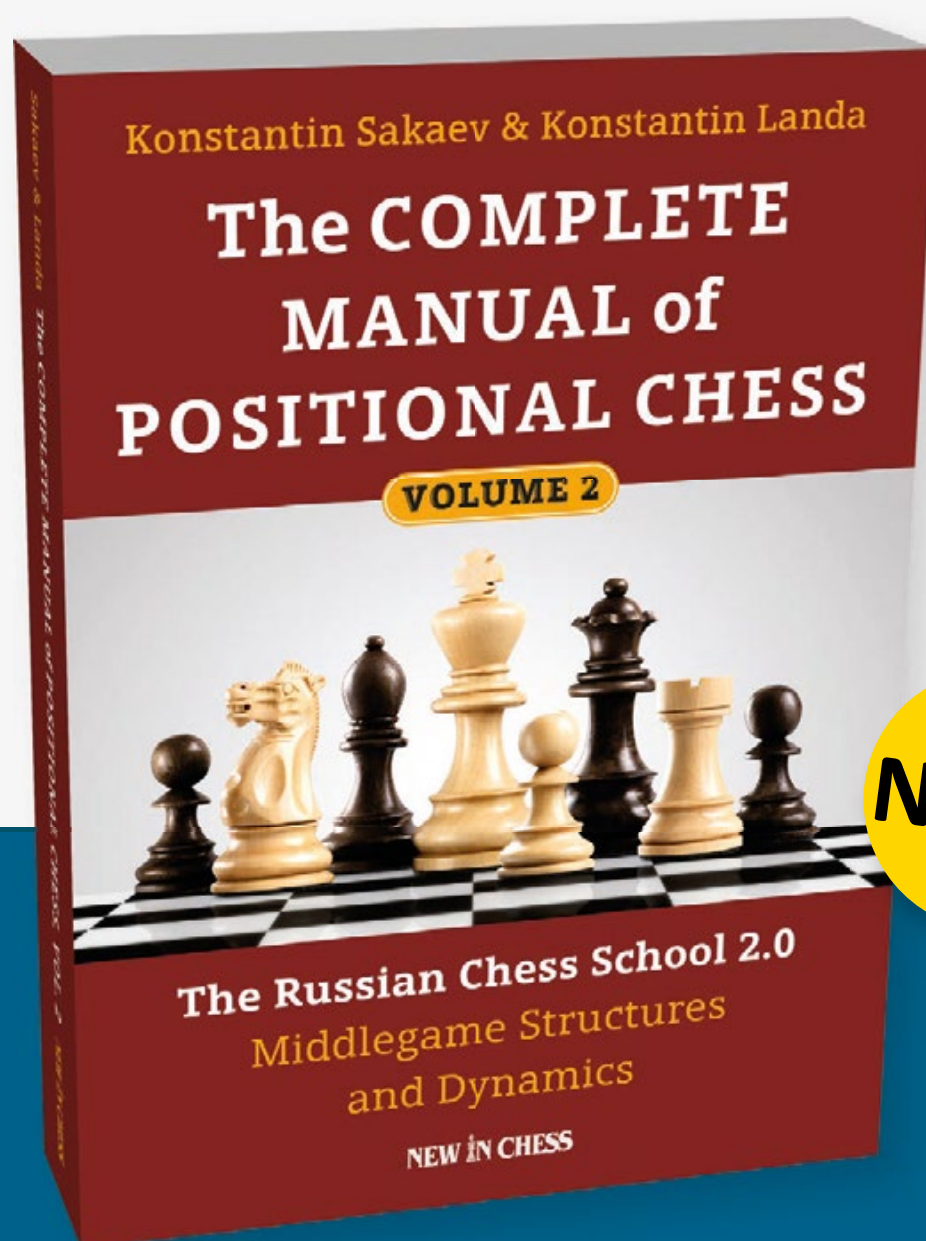
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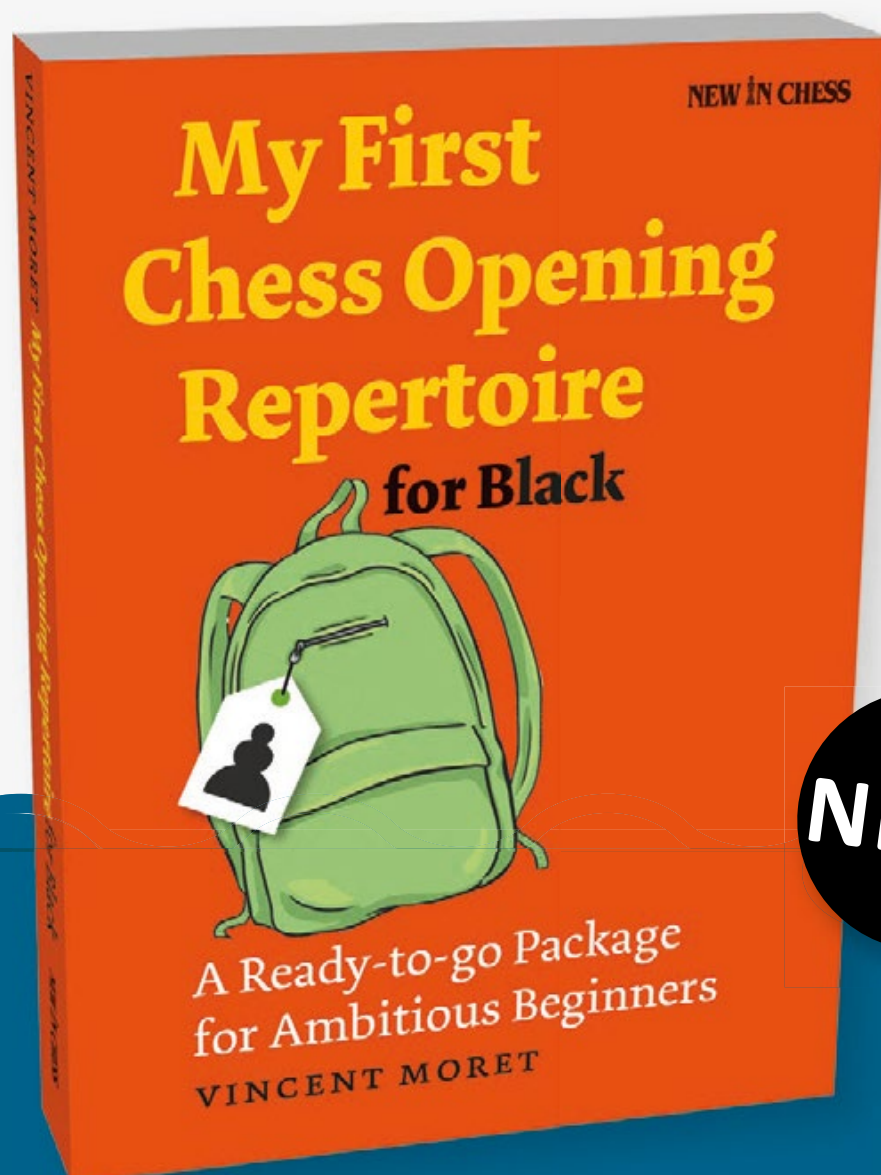
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From “A” for analysis to “Z” for zugzwang: there are in the new ChessBase 14 program a whole heap of improvements which make the entry and analysis of games all the more easy, as they do the production of training or practice material. The new function “Assisted Analysis” is an outstanding example: as you enter a game, whenever you click on a piece an evaluation is produced for all its possible target squares and this is highlighted on the board in colour. Thus even before you play it you can see whether there is a better move than the one you planned. This not only makes entering moves easy, but it also invites you to participate in subtle and continuous calculation training.

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Other improvements: new game notation with diagrams and coloured highlighting in encapsulated variations, one login for all ChessBase servers (playchess, ChessBase Cloud, Let's Check, ChessBase Accounts), analysis of a whole game with rapid error search, saving of the search mask, export of the diagram list as a Word document produces training material in a jiffy, automatic analysis jobs from correspondence games, simplified production of training questions, the search for similar structures now made interactive, replacing games in big databases considerably speeded up, improved search for doubles, easy use of tool to activate Fritz-Trainer and Engines, and much more.

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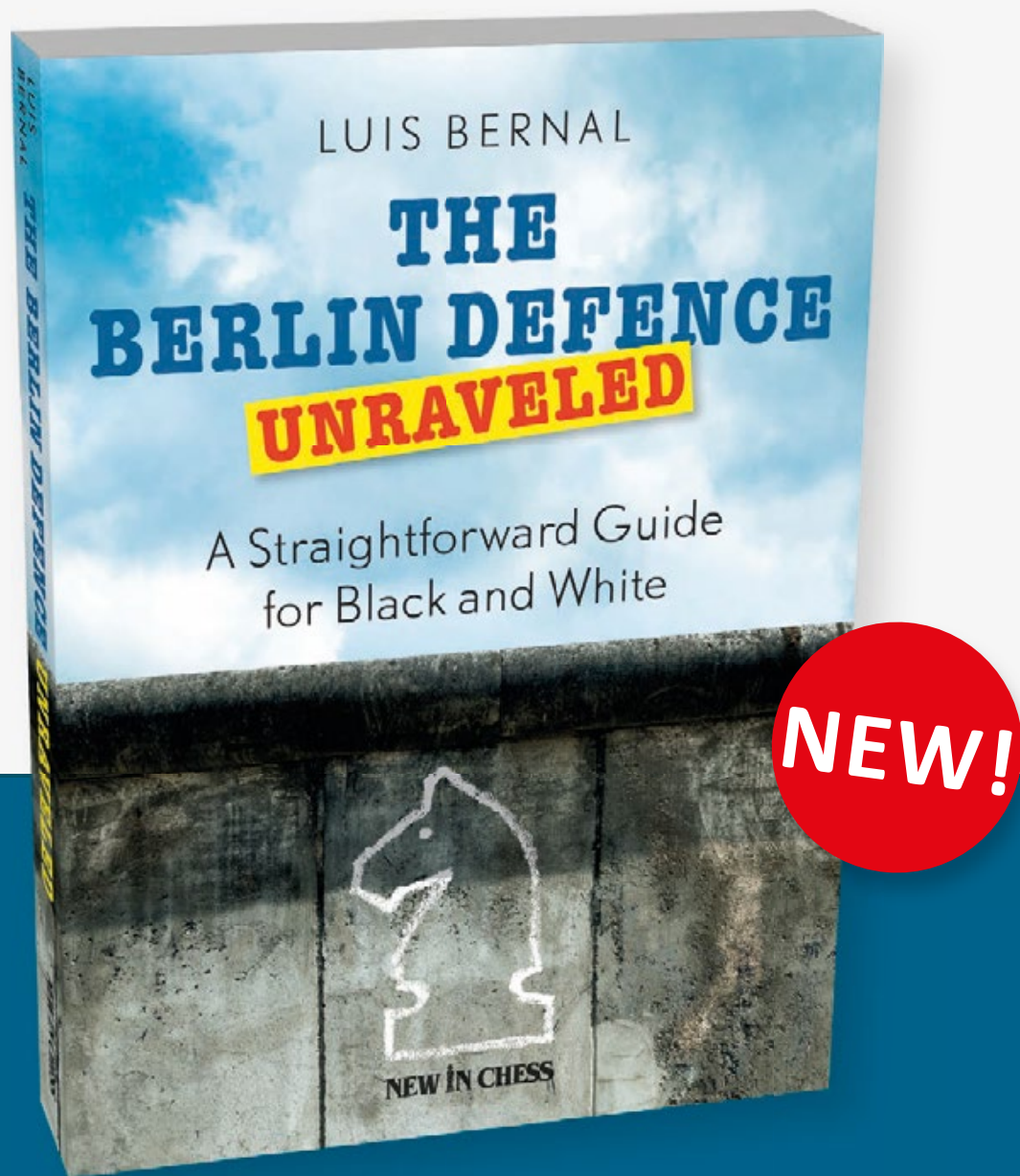
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Finally, the Berlin & the Anti-Berlins for club players



"These days White often dodges the main line, not least with 4.d3, and here Bernal's coverage is especially up to date, while also including at times some slightly offbeat counters."

CHESS Magazine (UK)

"The claim of 'unraveling' the Berlin is completely justified (..) An extremely instructive and clear-cut work."

Heins Daubler, Der Neue Tag Newspaper



'The games of Michael Adams had the most influence on me.'



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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

Who's that boy?

How long did it take you to realize that the young boy in front of the demonstration board is none other than Peter Svidler? Not very long, we guess. This touching photo of the future grandmaster from St. Petersburg showing one of his

early games was taken in 1989, during a session of the legendary Botvinnik-Kasparov School in the Moscow region. Actually, by then the Patriarch was barely involved anymore in the school for aspiring talents that he had started in the early 60s, and it was his pupil Garry

Kasparov – nonchalantly holding his watch – who was in charge. Any idea who the slightly older boys behind the desk are? Here are their names (l. to r.): Akaki Iashvili, Sergey Rublevsky, Mikhail Oratovsky, Vladimir Belikov and Konstantin Landa. All of

them also had an exception of the org is a Georgian of the org the 2017 The photo various pho was taken



became GMs, with the
of Akaki Iashvili, who
an IM and is a member
anizing committee of
World Cup in Tbilisi!
(or rather a collage of
tos, if you look carefully)
by Boris Dolmatovsky

and appeared in a book that the
Russian Chess Federation published
as a tribute to him on the occasion
of his 75th birthday. Boris has been
photographing chess in Russia for
half a century, and we are happy
that he remains a regular contributor
to our pages. ■



*Shakhmaty v objektivе Borisa
Dolmatovskovo (Chess through
the lens of Boris Dolmatovsky),
Moscow 2017*

Reaching your peak

Last October, when Alexander Riazantsev shocked everyone by becoming the surprise winner of the Russian Championship, many pundits suggested that the 31-year-old grandmaster might well have reached his chess peak. But now we hear that the Muscovite grandmaster recently reached another kind of 'chess peak'.

In an official press release of the Russian Chess Federation it is reported that Riazantsev successfully



Alexander Riazantsev is having his peak experience.

climbed to the very top of Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Russia and in Europe, and one of the world's deadliest mountains. The 5,643m ascent in difficult weather conditions lasted nearly 10 hours – and at the top, the Russian champion played the first ever game of chess there with one of his climbing group.

Riazantsev planned the trip a couple of years ago with a strong chess-playing amateur friend with the objective to play at the peak. Now he hopes his inspiration will lead to more chess played on top of other famous mountains!

The Wire

The claim is a bit confusing if we look at their track record, but FIDE's commercial partners Agon have announced that they have plans to 'continue improving user experience for chess players and fans alike'. Their latest gimmick to improve everyone's

lot is to strap players up to biometric monitors during the next World Championship match.

The innovation is being pushed because Agon – or 'World Chess' as they like to be known as these days – believe there's a market for fans tracking the ups and downs of title contestants during the critical moments of a match. 'Chess matches can be very dramatic, and biometric data gives fans and spectators alike another opportunity to follow the games and relate to them on a much deeper level,' CEO Ilya Merenzon told the press. 'It's not enough to know what the next best move is anymore: you have to know what the grandmaster is thinking. This makes watching the games so much more exciting. This is also one of our efforts to develop the premium broadcasting experience and bring value to chess fans.'

The device and software, currently under development by World Chess, will first have to be approved by FIDE and the players themselves. Contrary to Agon's claim the idea is not as revolutionary as they say and several events come to mind where similar devices were used. One was the Chess Masters Final in Bilbao last year, where Wesley So refused to continue wearing his watch when he found out that his heart rate was visible to his opponent.

Superheroes, Comics & Chess

In 1935, popular culture was transformed forever when DC published its first book of all-new, all-original comic material. To the delight of millions of kids everywhere, the modern comic book was born. It was the beginning of an era that's come to be regarded as the Golden Age of Comics in America, inspiring the birth of legions of superheroes such as Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and Spiderman.

So where's the chess? Well, happily leave that to the World Chess Hall of Fame in St. Louis that presents *POW! Capturing Superheroes, Comics & Chess*, an attractive, very colourful and



Pow! Bam! Wham! Another great exhibit at the WCHOF!

not-to-be-missed interactive exhibit that runs through 17 September at the WCHOF with over 200 chess-themed comic books on display. The historic comics collection includes rare editions, such as the earliest chess-related cover, DC Comics' *More Fun Comics* 76, released in 1942; and a 1947 DC Action Comics Superman in *The Cross Country Chess Crimes*. The framed comics adorn the walls of the WCHOF and many have also been made available for free on iPads, so visitors can still read the stories connected to the images on display.

Carving for champions

Everyone visiting the World Chess Hall of Fame is welcomed by the amazing sight of the giant wooden King 'Kong', measuring 14 feet 7 inches high, and weighing in at 2,280 pounds, making it the world's tallest chess piece. That record will not be broken, but the chess lovers in St. Louis will be delighted to hear about a



The helmet's done, now on to the chess pieces!

related project, the creation of a giant wooden community chess set.

Although a little smaller in scale and also weight, the tiny Australian Great Southern town of Kendenup honoured its conquering school chess champions by turning old street trees into giant chess pieces. Despite the town having a population of just 1,000, the kids of Kendenup Primary School – with no more than 80 students – punch above their weight as they have constantly been winners in regional and state chess competitions, and even runners-up in the National School Chess Championships in 2012.

So as a gesture to honour the achievements of their year five and six pupils who have excelled against much larger and wealthier schools, the community has come together to raise funds to hire two local wood carvers to sculpt giant chess pieces. The town council was going to cut down the old jarrah trees that stand at the entrance to the main street, but agreed simply to trim them back to leave enough of the trunks to shape.

Darrel Radcliffe, a former alumni, was tasked with wielding his trusty chainsaw and chisel for the biggest carvings he's ever done, starting with a king that will stand almost 4 metres tall (just over 13 feet), to be followed by more of the pieces and pawns. Another local sculptor, David Stockdale, will also carve a giant knight with his chainsaw and chisel to turn the jarrah trunk into public art that will then be moved into the main street.

Cleveland Scene

One of the main features in a summer issue of the weekly city-wide magazine *Cleveland Scene* was a profile of local librarian Pamela Eyerdam, and the diligent work she does as manager of the Special Collections at the popular Cleveland Public Library (CPL).

Eyerdam has overall responsibility at CPL for the world's largest public chess collection, the John G. White Chess and Checkers Collection,



Pamela Eyerdam with treasures from the John G. White Collection.

and this alone is well worth visiting Cleveland just to see. John Griswold White (1845-1928) was a popular local attorney, philanthropist, avid chess collector and bibliophile, whose personal bequest forms the core of the massive chess library and collection he travelled the world over a 50 year period to amass.

When White died, he not only bequeathed his chess collection to the CPL, but also provided with it the John G. White Trust Fund, the annual income to be used for the acquisition of new materials to maintain and upkeep his vast collection. He stipulated that it was all to be kept together in the CPL, and made available freely for all to see and use.

These days, the White collection is known the world over. Eyerdam says the special collections wing (on the third floor of the main library building) gets more tourists than local visitors. Every summer, for example, they host chess researchers from American and European universities. It's said of Eyerdam that she has taken John G. White's philosophies and attitudes to heart by creating an open and welcoming atmosphere that's a rarity among such large chess collections. She says her hospitality is in keeping with the library's 'public university mantra' and the progressive attitudes of John G. White and former Cleveland mayor Tom Johnson.

More Legal's Mate

Anyone who has ever investigated the ever-growing US scholastic chess operations will tell you that it is becoming a very fierce and competitive market – and so competitive, some have had cause to resort to that other well-known US activity of pursuing legal action.

Recently it was reported in the *New York Post* that a Manhattan tutoring company that claims it taught Tinseltown A-lister Hugh Jackman's kids how to play chess, along with other high-end clients, wants to legally check a former teacher it claims had brazenly stole its pupils.

Chess At 3, which specializes in after-school chess activities using stories about kings and queens, rooks, knights and pawns to teach young clients the art of the game, claims tutor Hugh Kramer went rogue and stole away 24 kids he was teaching



Hugh Kramer is accused of spreading the chess secrets of his former employer.

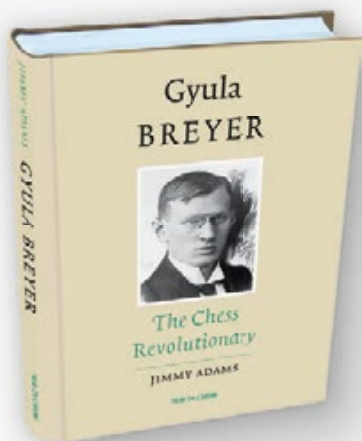
when he resigned from the company.

When he was hired three years ago, Kramer signed a contract agreeing to return the company's materials and acknowledging that the kids he taught on behalf of Chess At 3 would remain clients of the business, the firm claims in a Manhattan Supreme Court lawsuit.

The company is seeking \$100,000 damages, and wants a court order barring Kramer from teaching its students and using its trade secrets. Apparently Kramer hasn't responded to the charges nor to media requests. ■

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Current Bestsellers



Gyula Breyer

The Chess Revolutionary

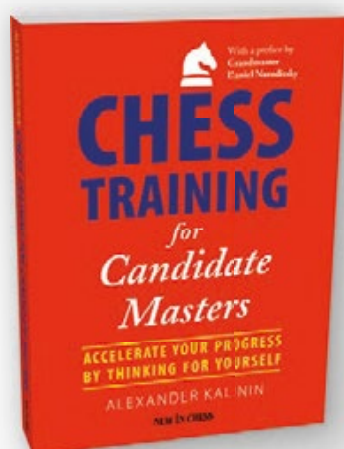
Jimmy Adams 880 pages - hardcover - €45.95

"Ranks at the top with Kasparov's various mega series, Nimzowitsch's 'My System' and Alekhine's books of his best games."

GM Raymond Keene

"The Hypermoderns owed much to Breyer, as becomes clear in this fine, detailed biography."

CHESS Magazine



Chess Training for Candidate Masters

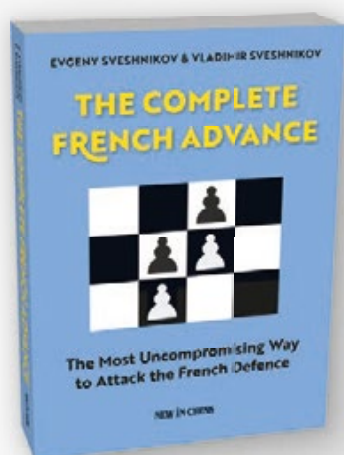
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"Kalinin writes that the target audience of his book is up to about 2200 Elo in rating, but it embraces much more than that. It is a good book for both club players AND grandmasters!"

GM Simen Agdestein, VG Daily Newspaper



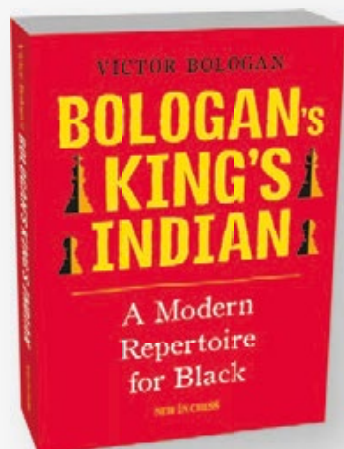
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Bologan's King's Indian

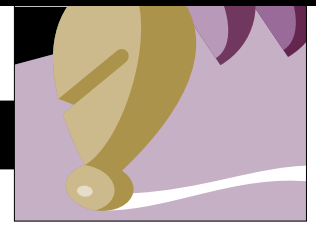
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available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com



Strongest of all time

Re the graphic in New In Chess 2017/5, I think that the 'Strongest Tournament of All Time' was the World Championship in The Hague and Moscow in 1948. Not only because of the participation of the best five players of the time, but also because of the importance of the tournament – with the official title of World Champion at stake – and because of the number of games played by every contender: 20.

I also think that the presence of the reigning World Champion is not absolutely necessary for some of the strongest tournament of all time. So I propose to include the following two: the Candidates Tournament in Zürich in 1953 and in Yugoslavia (Bled, Zagreb and Belgrade) in 1959 (by the way, in 1950 and in 1956 Reshevsky was not playing and in Curacao 1962 Tal was ill and he had to leave the tournament).

Antonio Rosino
Venice, Italy

The Diplomatic Chess Board

In New In Chess 2017/4, in the article 'The Diplomatic Chess Board', you have presented an unfair criticism of Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

Western media are often prone and quick to criticize and present Russia and its president as the origin of many evils in today's world politics. It is most unfair and undeserved.

Mr Putin is trying to give back to his people an identity and a strong national unity after years of devastating pseudo 'liberalism' after the fall of the Soviet Union.

We should also not forget, for example, that part of the American political 'elite' still sees Russia as an adverse, if not an hostile, country against the wish of President Putin.

Furthermore, Russia has not attacked Iraq, Libya and Syria. In Ukraine and Crimea, Russia needed to defend itself against an organized NATO's destabilization. It is all well documented. Do we think we are

better, in our Western 'liberal democracies', after what we have done in Iraq, Libya and Syria?

Philippe Briffaut
Loreto, Italy

Puzzled

Perhaps Judit Polgar can clear up a small mystery for me. In her column in New In Chess 2017/1, she wrote: 'In 1985 my sisters travelled to the New York Open accompanied by our mom, while I had to stay at home.'

Write to us

New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093
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Letters may be edited or abridged

During the 1985 New York International, which ran concurrently with the Open, I played a rather dull draw against her sister Susan. At one point in the middlegame, a tiny girl stopped by our game, looked at the position for a few seconds, then glanced up at me. Her glance told me that she had understood more about that game in those few seconds than I had in a couple of hours of playing it.

At the time, I 'knew' that our visitor was 8-year-old Judit, whose fame as a prodigy was already spreading. (The following year, she would win the tournament's unrated section, a master-level achievement.) Was she really not there? (Their other sister, 10-year-old Sophia, was playing in another section of the tournament, but I still felt certain it was Judit who had viewed my game.)

FM David Gertler
Delaware, USA

Editorial postscript:

We asked Judit Polgar and she has to disappoint you: 'The girl the gentleman remembers is indeed Sofi. My first visit was in 1986 when I won the unrated section of the New York Open with 7½ from 8.'

Caucasian blood

In chess I am sure the quote from Levon Aronian on the cover of New In Chess 2017/5 is not problematic. However, it may be construed as offensive by people in the US (especially, and unfortunately, in light of the events of August 12 in Charlottesville). Not that you can or should do anything; I share this simply to inform you.

Victoria E. Dow, Director, West Chester
Public Library
West Chester, PA, USA

Cricket

I think Sir Viv Richards and the Indian players would do well to stick to cricket. The photograph showing them playing chess (New In Chess 2017/4. p.12) during a light-hearted moment demonstrates that they don't seem to know how to set the board up legally. Could this be another case of the curse of the dreaded black square in the right hand corner? Owzat?

Carl Portman
Banbury, England

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Sinquefield's Largesse

There has been a chess renaissance in the United States in recent years and one man, Rex Sinquefield, a wealthy, retired investor, has been far-and-away the biggest factor.

The Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis, a state-of-the-art facility that he founded and financed a decade ago, has become the *de facto* home of the United States Championships. And for the last five years, the club has also been the site of one of the world's elite tournaments, named for its benefactor: The Sinquefield Cup. This year, the club



added a rapid and blitz championship, which, like the Sinquefield Cup, is part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Indeed, over the years, the number of events and the total amount of prizes offered have expanded. The graphic below shows that progression as well as which of the world's top players have benefitted the most. Not surprisingly, Americans dominate the list because of the large prizes offered in the U.S. Championships, which are not open to players representing other federations.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

Cumulative prize winnings of top players in tournaments held in the Saint Louis club

(Based on publicly available sources)

Hikaru Nakamura ▶

\$426,250

He has the edge on other Americans because he has played in all the Sinquefield Cups and six U.S. Championships at the club.



◀ Fabiano Caruana

\$341,250

His total is boosted by a win in the Sinquefield Cup (2014) and one in the U.S. Championship (2016).



◀ Gata Kamsky

\$238,000

Though he has not played in the Sinquefield Cup, he won four U.S. Championships at the club (2010, 2011, 2013, and 2014).



◀ Levon Aronian

\$236,250

The top non-American in the list, he won a Sinquefield Cup (2015) and the Grand Tour Rapid & Blitz tournament this year.

Magnus Carlsen ▼

\$201,250

The World Champion won the first Sinquefield Cup.



Wesley So ▶

\$210,000

He won the Sinquefield Cup last year and the U.S. Championship this year.



▼ Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

\$168,750

He won this year's Sinquefield Cup.



Veselin Topalov ▶

\$123,750

The former World Champion tied for second in the 2014 Sinquefield Cup.



Irina Krush ▼

\$131,000*

She has won five of her seven U.S. women's titles in Saint Louis.



◀ Viswanathan Anand

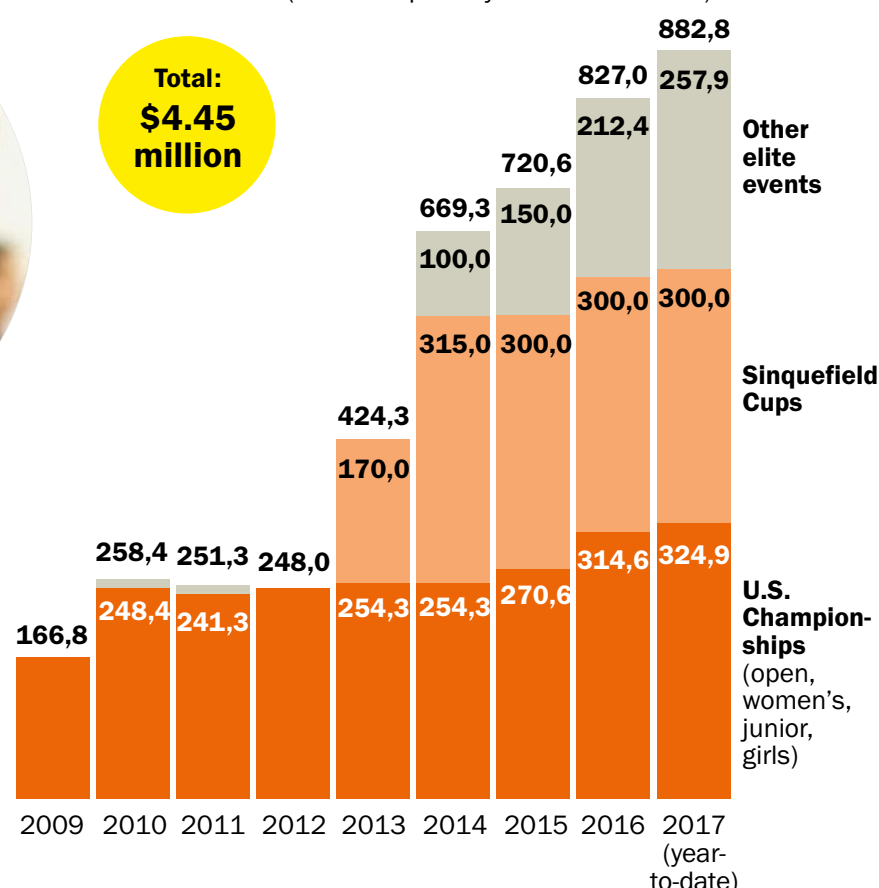
\$163,750

The former World Champion won the 2016 Champions Showdown.



Total prizes in elite tournaments held in the Saint Louis club

In thousands of dollars (based on publicly available sources)



*Figures for 2009 and 2011 were unavailable and were estimated.

Fair & Square



Phiona Mutesi: 'My life changed and became more meaningful when I was introduced to the game of chess.'

I believe if other children were exposed to the same opportunity I was years back, their lives could make a lot more sense and be more hopeful.'
(*The Queen of Katwe* star during a recent visit to the African Rural University and Uganda Rural Development and Training Girls' School to launch a new chess training program)

Vasily Smyslov: 'In chess, as in life, a man is his own most dangerous opponent.'

Lennox Lewis: 'If the media didn't know I played chess, there'd be no angle on me at all.'
(*The former boxer and three-time World Heavyweight Champion*)

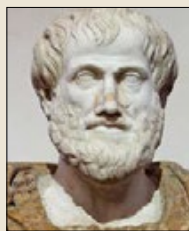


Saul Alinsky: 'Tactics mean doing what you can with what you have.'
(*The American community organizer and writer, 1909-1972*)

Vishy Anand: 'You can roughly compare a 35-year-old tennis player and a 47-year-old chess player. I try to learn from him. People like (Roger) Federer tell you that you can still hang in there.'
(*The veteran five-time ex-champion quashing retirement rumours on ESPN India*)

Johannes Zukertort: 'Chess is the struggle against error.'

Levon Aronian: 'There is still the barbarian in me – I won't let my food be taken away.'
(*The Armenian chess star featured in the July issue of the New Yorker magazine*)



Aristotle: 'When you are lonely, when you feel yourself an alien in the world, play Chess. This will raise your spirits and be your counsellor in war.'

Kim Ledger: 'My beautiful boy, so loving, so talented, so independent, so caring, so young ... no more chess games mate ... this is it, couldn't beat you anyway.'
(*Social media message posted by Heath Ledger's father, following the sudden death of his award-winning Hollywood actor son in 2008*)



Peter Balakian: 'For a small, land-locked country, chess is a particularly ingenious way, and effective way, of mobilising both competitive spirit and sports competition and intellectual discipline, without the need for huge infrastructural resources and, of course, financial spending.'
(*The Armenian-American poet, writer and academic, who won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, in the July issue of The New Yorker magazine*)

Bill Cosby: 'The game of chess. Supposedly men made it up, and it's about war and men and

the ravages and the bravery and the genius of commanding and moving pieces and ... No. It's marriage. The Queen moves anywhere she wants.'
(*In the comedy special Far from Finished in 2013*)

Garry Kasparov: 'Don't you know that hard work is a talent?'



Raymond Chandler: 'You and Capablanca.'
(*The closing line to 'The High Window', the third of the chess-playing author's detective novels to feature Philip Marlowe*)

Evan Esar: 'Age brings wisdom to some men, and to others chess.'
(*The American humourist, 1899-1995, famous for writing Esar's Comic Dictionary*)

Bing Gordon: 'Life is like a chess game – you don't want to waste a move.'
(*The Silicon Valley video game executive, speaking during his keynote address to the 2013 Tech Summit in Chicago*)



Robert Burton: 'Chess is too troublesome a game for some men's brains; it is too full of anxiety, all but as bad as study; besides it is a testy, choleric game, and very offensive to him that loseth the mate.'
(*The English author, Oxford scholar and clergyman, 1577-1640, writing in his best-known classic 'The Anatomy of Melancholy'*)

Stephen Hawking: 'Quiet people have the loudest minds.'

MVL wins a big one and is hungry for more

Rightly called the Sinquefield Cup

Amid a mind-boggling stream of top-quality events, the Sinquefield Cup remains St. Louis's finest. In the fifth edition, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave thwarted the ambitions of World Champion Magnus Carlsen. The Frenchman prevailed in their direct encounter and kept his cool in the decisive last round. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** reports from the Central West End of St. Louis, a Mecca for anyone with a passion for the game, thanks to the incredible support of Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield.

With my first coffee and a fruit juice from the Starbucks next door, I sit down at one of the tables in front of the World Chess Hall of Fame. The sun is already warm, but there are still whiffs of morning freshness in the air. A father watches his little son toddle next to the gigantic wooden king, 'the tallest chess piece in the world'. An assistant from the WCHOF is setting up pieces on the boards on the tables around me. Not only that, next to each board she places a chess clock. Because there is a tournament to start? No, just so anyone who passes by and

wants to play a timed game can do so. At the other side of the street two men are engrossed in a slow game, but the other tables in front of the St. Louis Chess Club are still empty, unlike the row of tables next door at the Kingside Diner, where people are having breakfast.

As I sip from my coffee, I see two men approaching from the corner of my eye. One of them is wearing a Grand Chess Tour souvenir T-shirt saying in big fat letters 'Echecs, Schaak, Chess', referring to the countries that the tour visits this year. Not paying particular attention, I think



Over the past years, Garry Kasparov, a frequent guest in St. Louis, and chess benefactor Rex Sinquefeld have become good friends.

that they must be chess fans until they stop to say hello and the man in the T-shirt turns out to be Garry Kasparov himself. Slightly disguised with sun glasses and a cap that reminds me of the old Botvinnik, he is having a morning constitutional with Michael Khodarkovsky, the President of the Kasparov Foundation. The champ is in excellent spirits, but few words are wasted. He spreads his hands and looking around him with a broad smile, his eyes say it all: isn't it totally amazing what has been achieved here in so little time and has turned this neighbourhood into one of the chess epicentres of the world? It certainly is.

500 different vodkas

Actually, the neighbourhood we are talking about is more part of a street, a stretch of maybe two hundred metres of Maryland Avenue, and a couple of side-streets. If you want to experience the unique chess atmosphere of St. Louis, all you have to do is visit this part of the Central West End, where in a very small circle around the Club everything happens. If you want to see famous chess players you do not have to try hard. You may find them at the Drunken Fish having sushi for lunch, or in the garden of Bar Italia for dinner. Or, once the tournament is over, in Sub Zero, an excel-

lent place for lunch and dinner, but even more a great bar for late night drinks. A couple of years ago, Alexander Grischuk was so impressed by the choice of different vodka's they have (close to 500), that he ordered a huge bottle of one of his favourites and lots of shot glasses for anyone who wanted to try.

Strolling around in the area, you may also run into the man who put St. Louis on the world chess map. Several times a day, Rex Sinquefeld walks from his city home around the corner to the Club, casually dressed in a polo shirt, shorts and a sports cap. The main attributes that distin-

‘If you want to experience the unique chess atmosphere of St. Louis, all you have to do is visit this part of the Central West End’

guish the multimillionaire from the average American man of his age are his signature woollen socks, which he must be very fond of, and the body guard that inconspicuously follows him at a distance.

Hosting the 2009 US Championship at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis, which had opened one year earlier, proved to be the beginning of a chess adventure for Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield the size of which can barely be grasped anymore. The graphic by Dylan McClain on page 14 in this issue provides some insight into the kind of money they have spent on chess in the past several years, but is limited to the prize-money in the main events they have sponsored. And there is so much more. The World Chess Hall of Fame incessantly stages chess exhibitions and, all through the year, hosts

events combining chess and arts and, one of Jeanne Sinquefield’s greatest passions, music. At the Club there are permanent lessons and tournaments, requiring an ever-expanding staff. And for the grandmasters-in-residence and visitors from abroad, two guesthouses were bought next to the Club.

The wonderful thing is that everything is done with so much taste and attention to detail. The Q Boutique at the WCHOF is a joy to visit, and in the shop at the Club a wide array of memorabilia are for sale, from coffee mugs with the Club’s logo to all sorts of clothing specifically made to commemorate the top events. Many of the memorabilia come in handy when autograph sessions are organized with all the stars at the start of these highlights – very efficiently run sessions that invariably

draw large crowds. And of course there are the state-of-the-art live broadcasts, produced by Spectrum Studios, the company of the sponsor’s son Randy Sinquefield. And did I already mention the stylish tournament brochures and the wonderful daily bulletins?

Tight race

My main objective when crossing the Atlantic was the fifth Sinquefield Cup (a name that Rex Sinquefield himself initially had his doubts about, until he was persuaded by his closest advisers), which this time happened to take place in a month that was extremely busy, even for the Club’s standards. The year’s main event was preceded by the Match of the Millennials, a team tournament between young talents from the US and a team with the best juniors from around the world. And barely had the Sinquefield Cup ended, when the fourth leg of the 2017 Grand Chess Tour started: the Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz with the eagerly-awaited return of the aforementioned Garry Kasparov.

But as said, although I stayed on for Kasparov’s one-off comeback, I had arrived for the first classical leg of the GCT, with a mouth-watering field that included seven players from the Top-10, World Champion Magnus Carlsen being one of them. With the Norwegian not in the best of forms of late and his rivals eager to pounce on him, a tight race might be expected. And indeed, although Carlsen played his best chess in months, it did turn into a tight race with five players still in contention for first place at the start of the final round.

Since we have such great annotated games to show you, I will reduce the intrigue of the tournament to this vantage point, situation at the top of the standings with one round to go. The final day began with Aronian, Vachier-Lagrave and Anand topping the table, half a point ahead of Carlsen and Karjakin. A look at the pairings suggested that



Particularly in the late afternoon and the evening, the chess tables in front of the St. Louis Chess Club are occupied by players of all levels and ages.

AUSTIN FULLER



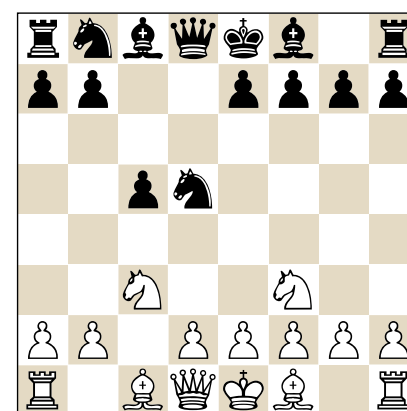
NOTES BY

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave**Magnus Carlsen****Maxime Vachier-Lagrave**

St. Louis 2017 (4)

English, Symmetrical Variation

1. ♖f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3. ♘c3 d5
4.cxd5 ♘xd5

**5.e3**

It is well-known that the position after 5.e4 ♘xc3?! 6.dxc3 ♔xd1+ 7.♔xd1 is very comfortable for White. Black's main issue is the unfortunate advance of the c-pawn, not only because it is a potential target, but also because it makes ...e5 impossible, as this would create a blatant hole on d5.

5... ♘xc3 6.dxc3

A move that was successfully used by Radjabov on his way to winning the Geneva Grand Prix.

6.bxc3 g6 7.h4 ♘g7 8.h5 was Levon Aronian's choice several times, both in the Sinquefield Cup and the Rapid&Blitz afterwards. After 8... ♘c6 9.♘a3 ♔a5 the rook lift 10.♖h4! was his choice in the first round, and I realized that, strangely enough, I had considered this idea myself far too long ago, for while the game was in progress I had absolutely no recollection of even having looked at this position in the past!

6... ♔xd1+ 7.♔xd1

White is a tempo down in this endgame, but if Black allows e4 without a fight, his situation still could be unpleasant.

7... ♘f5 8.♘d2 ♘c6 9.e4



Major tournaments such as the Sinquefield Cup start with highly popular signing sessions at the Kingside Diner that draw chess fans from all over the country.

Vachier-Lagrave (White against Nepomniachtchi) held the best cards, while if the Frenchman drew, Carlsen (White against Aronian) might pull off a tiebreak if he won his game – a tiebreak that MVL would probably be happy to avoid with the dramatic and controversial tiebreak of the 2015 London Classic still fresh in mind.

But this time no tiebreak was needed. Carlsen did beat Aronian, but since Vachier-Lagrave played a great game to defeat Nepo and Anand made a draw with Black against Wesley So, the Frenchman could celebrate his finest victory to date.

To make you relive the excitement of the 2017 Sinquefield Cup, we bring you five annotated games; master classes that show wonderful imagination and read like short stories full of suspense and unexpected twists and turns.

To begin with the proud winner, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, tries to explain (to you and to himself) the key game of the event, his hard-fought win with the black pieces against Magnus Carlsen, a titanic struggle with lots of deep thinking.

Next, Carlsen's second Peter Heine Nielsen walks you through his boss's win against Aronian. The World Champion may have been disappointed that he spoiled one and a half points (from 'objectively'

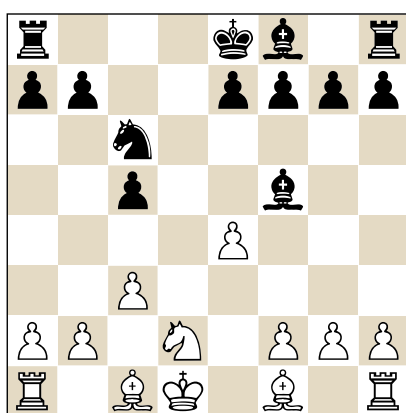
winning positions against MVL and Nakamura he made only half a point – which effectively cost him tournament victory), this fine last-round achievement against one of his closest rivals must have confirmed his feeling that he is on his way back to the level that he expects from himself.

For Levon Aronian this loss was a painful blow (which he duly avenged in the ensuing Rapid & Blitz), but the Armenian continues to show the imaginative and beguiling chess that he has recently spoiled us with, as witness his inspired game against Nakamura.

And finally, there are two highlights with comments by the inimitable Anish Giri. When I asked Anish which games he wanted to have a look at, he immediately mentioned Vishy Anand's brilliant effort against Fabiano Caruana. The Indian former World Champion continues to amaze us. At 46, Anand was twice the age of the youngest participant, Wesley So, but that did not stop him from playing for first place till the very last day.

And, of course, Anish looks at the game that ultimately decided the fight for first place, MVL's great effort in a virtual 'must-win' situation against 'Nepo'.

Here they are, five great games, or, to quote our book reviewer Matthew Sadler, five stars!

**9...Bg6**

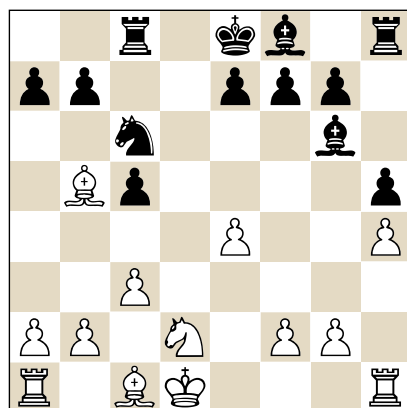
Svidler's choice against Radjabov was 9...Bg6, and I decided that I wanted something less passive (see Radjabov's notes to that game in this issue – ed.).

10. Bb5

10. Bb5 0-0-0 11.f3 e6 12.a4 Bg7 13. Bc4 f5!? was why I decided to bring my bishop to g6. Even though there is a chance that my bishop will be seriously restricted by White's pawn chain, with the help of the thematic move ...f5, it is also a serious weapon against the king once it lands on c2, which is its natural square in these positions.

10...Bc8 11.h4 h5

11...f6?! 12.h5 Bf7 13. Bc2 would clearly be very unpleasant for Black.

**12. Bf1?**

12.f3 a6 13. Bxc6+ Bxc6 14. Bc4 f6 shouldn't be in White's favour.

12...e6

After 12...a6, 13. Bf1! is the main idea behind Bf1, since the knight can now move around freely, without any concern about either the bishop or the pawn e4: 13...e6 14.a4 Bg7 15.g3, and this looks more comfortable for White, since ...f5 will never really work now.

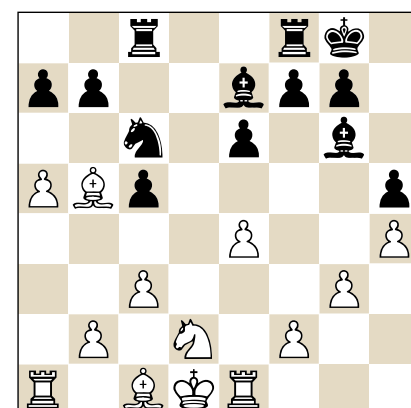
13.a4

13. Bc4!? a6 14. Bxc6+ Bxc6 15. Bde5 was a try to exploit the awkward

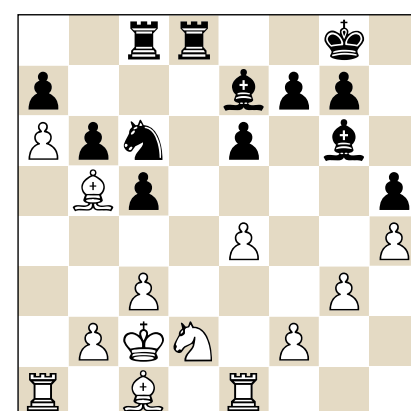
position of Black's pieces. Still, after 15...Bd6+ 16. Bc2 Bh7 17. Bf4 f6 18. Bc4 Bd8 19.f3 e5 Black looks to be in time, and with the bishops, the weakness on d5 shouldn't be too worrying.

13...Bg7 14.g3 0-0 15.a5!?

15. Bf1 was also an option, since after 15...f5 16. Bc4 Bf7 the position looks about equal, even though my pieces are about to get more active. The text-move creates a definite imbalance.

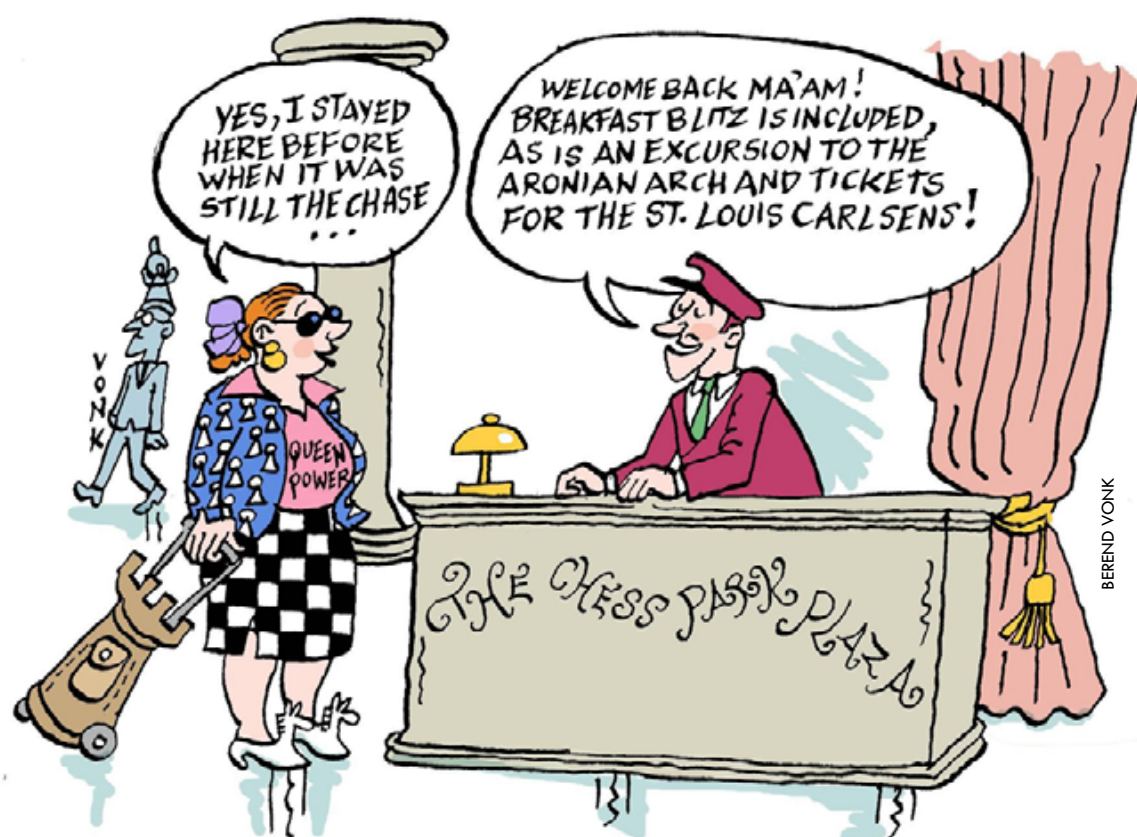
**15...Bfd8**

After 15...Bde5 16.a6 b6 17. Ba4 Bcd8 White goes 18. Be2. I wanted White's king to go to c2 before launching my counterplay on the kingside, which is why I delayed ...Bde5. But it may still have been a decent choice: I get less counterplay on the kingside, but at the same time White's king is cut off from all the queenside action on the light squares.

16.a6 b6 17. Bc2

We are now getting a highly unusual position. My pieces have been developed far better, and all White seems to be able to hope for is playing against the a7-pawn. That being said, it also means that any time I

ON ARRIVAL FOR THE 2020 SINQUEFIELD CUP



St. Louis: Chess Capital of the United States

The Chess Club and Scholastic Center is the headquarters of chess in the Central West End of St. Louis, but the surrounding community has also become an integral part of the chess players' lives. The map below shows where they stay, play, wine and dine, and relax. DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN



CARRIAGE LANE

Sub Zero Vodka Bar
(Offers the largest selection of vodkas in the US)

Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis

Bar Italia Ristorante

Drunken Fish (Sushi)

Brennan's

Kingside Diner
(Owned by the club)

Chess House 1
(Owned by the club)

Chess House 2
(Owned by the club)

Bar Louie

Coffee Cartel

Starbucks

World Chess Hall of Fame

World's largest chess piece

Chase Park Plaza

MARYLAND PLAZA

EUCLID AVE

MARYLAND AVE

YORK

ARGYLE AVE

LINDELL BLVD

WEST PINE BLVD



WEST PINE BLVD

EUCLID AVE

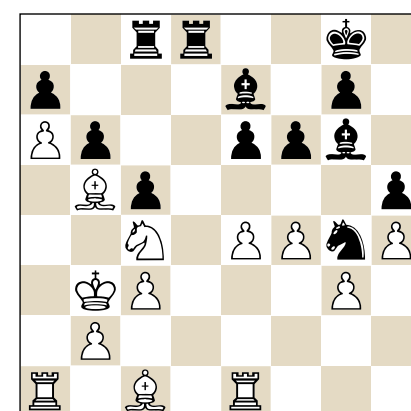
TAYLOR AVE





The overture to a titanic struggle. The encounter between Magnus Carlsen and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in Round 4 was the key game of the 2017 Sinquefeld Cup.

LENNART OOTES



20...f2

My first idea was 20...e5 21.fxe5 fxe5, but I didn't fancy allowing the following: 22.g5! g5 23.hxg5, and White threatens to get a serious grip on the d-file. Also, it is obvious that b6 will be a serious threat to take into account at every turn: 23...f7 (23...f7 24.ad1 e6? 25.d5, and Black is in a world of trouble) 24.ad1 h7 25.xd8 xd8 26.a4 g6, and now 27.b6! allows White to strike first.

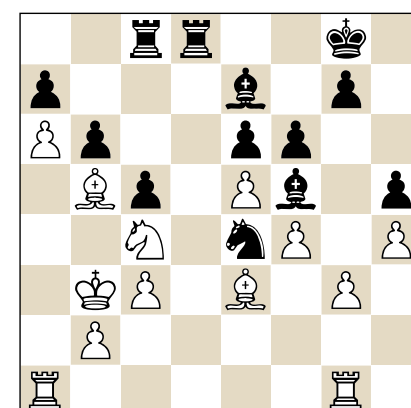
21.e5

21.f5 f7 22.fxe6 xe6 23.e5 f5 was also an option, but it feels a bit unnatural to open up the centre with Black's pieces all in the action.

21...e4 22.e3 f5

22...xg3?? fails to 23.g1.

23.g1

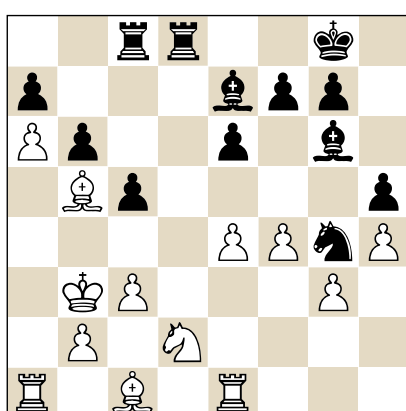


Here I wasn't feeling as comfortable as I had expected to, the reason being that despite looking good on the kingside, I couldn't see a good way to exert more pressure there, while White has a plan consisting of a3, c4 and b5, in which case my a7-pawn could be in serious trouble, since the knight would be virtually impregnable.

open up the centre, more of White's pieces will be able to join the party to attack a7. In any case, it was almost impossible to grasp all the subtleties of the position, and I'll try to guide you through my thought processes during the game as well as I can.

After 17.e2 my idea was 17...a5!? to restrict White's development. And after 18.a4 (18.b3? f6 19.b2 xd2+) 18...f6 19.c4 xc4 20.xc4 f7 White doesn't have much to show for his pawn advance.

17...e5! 18.f4 g4 19.b3!



Now I got my counterplay on the kingside, but surprisingly I couldn't find a way to seriously trouble the backward pawn on g3. At the same time, White's king is ideally placed in case of a light-squared bishop exchange, since it is ready to either invade the queenside or support a

knight on b5. I spent a considerable amount of time weighing all plans, but failed to come up with the most efficient one.

19...f6

Best was 19...f8!. I thought about this move, to prevent f5, but didn't connect the dots with the following idea, which was suggested to me after the game: 20.c4 f6!. My knight had gone from c6 to g4 to attack the kingside, so I didn't realize it could come back to c7 to challenge White's domination on the queenside!: 21.e5 d5 22.e3 c7 23.c6 d3, with comfortable play.

In case of 19...f6, 20.f5 was my main issue, since I didn't fancy the position after 20...h7 21.fxe6 fxe6 22.c4 c6.

Also I was trying to make 19...c4+! work, but I thought better of it because of the following line: 20.c4 c5 21.e3 (21.e5!? might be even more efficient!: 21...f2 - after 21...xe5 22.fxe5 f2 23.g5! xe1 24.xe1! the bishop pair is a serious annoyance - 22.e2 xe5 23.xf2 d3 24.xd3 xd3 25.f5, with a white edge) 21...xe3 22.xe3 xe4 23.xc5 xc5 24.c4!, and I felt Magnus could either fight for the d-file or advance his queenside majority, when his a6-pawn could represent a serious trump.

20.c4

23...♖d5

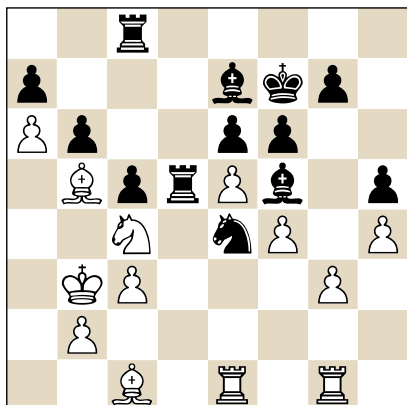
I decided to play this move to fight against the redeployment of the knight from c4 to b5, by trying to force White to exchange pawns in the centre. Also, as soon as White moves his knight, I might get counterplay with ...c4.

24.♞ae1

I am showing the following line after 24.♞xb6? because it is beautiful (but it is not the only way to refute White's play): 24...♞b8! 25.♞xd5 ♞xb5+ 26.♞c4 exd5+! 27.♞xb5 ♞d7+ 28.♞a5 ♞d8 mate.

24...♞f7 25.♞c1

Threatening 26.♞e3, meaning I need to take an immediate decision.

**25...♞h7?**

I hesitated about 25...♞g6! and took the wrong decision. I did realize that White could suddenly mix things up on the kingside by trying to achieve dominance. But even though White will win a tempo with the bishop on g6, it is vital that the bishop gets access to h5: 26.g4 hxg4 27.♞xg4 f5 28.♞g2 ♞h5! 29.♞eg1 g6, and not only is the bishop more active and aiming at the d1-square, but it also prevents any breakthrough with h5.

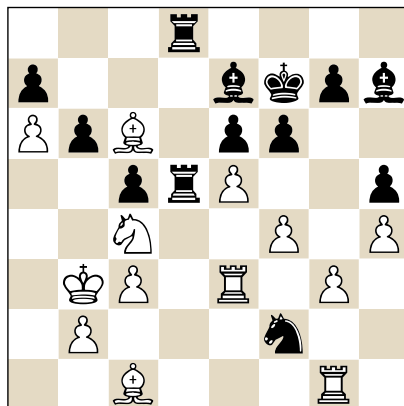
26.♞e3?

A bit of a relief, since I had thought of an idea.

After 26.g4! hxg4 27.♞xg4 ♞f2 28.♞g3 ♞d3 29.♞eg1 ♞xc1+ 30.♞xc1 I would be in big trouble, because White suddenly has trumps on both wings! It is also very difficult to suggest a defensive set-up for the problem on the g-file.

26...♞cd8! 27.♞c6 ♞f2!

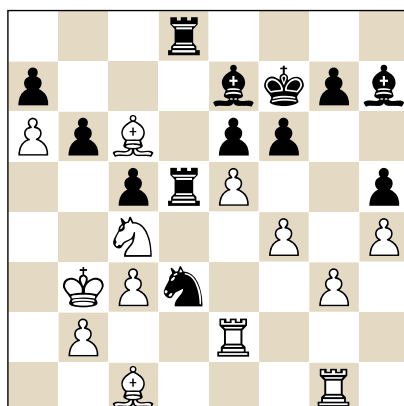
Giving up an exchange that White can't really take, which allows me to achieve some more serious counterplay on the d-file.

**28.♞e2**

28.♞xd5?! exd5 29.♞a3 would allow me to choose from a variety of plans, and while too many good choices is rarely a good thing, here it is hard to go wrong: 29...♞d3 30.♞a2 d4!, or 29...c4+ 30.♞a2 ♞c5 31.♞e2 ♞d3, or 29...♞g4 30.♞ee1 ♞d3 are all good for Black.

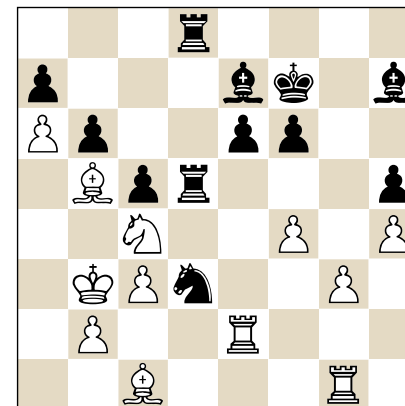
28...♞d3

After 28...♞g4!? 29.exf6 gxf6 30.♞ge1 ♞d1 31.♞xe6 ♞e5! is an awesome shot to turn the tables that I had completely missed. Otherwise, I might have put back my knight on g4, since while d3 is a good square for the knight, it will also hinder my play on the d-file there.

**29.exf6**

Here 29.♞e3! ♞e4 30.♞d2 was the best try for White. There now follows a more or less forced line from Black's perspective: 30...♞b8 31.♞b7 b5 32.♞a5 c4+ 33.♞a2 b4! 34.♞xc4 bxc3 35.bxc3 ♞c5! 36.♞xd5 ♞xd5 37.♞xd5 exd5 38.♞d6+ ♞xd6

39.exd6 ♞xa6 40.f5 ♞d8 41.♞b1 ♞e8! 42.♞xa7 ♞xd6 43.♞d4 ♞d7, and Black seems to hold.

29...gxf6 30.♞b5

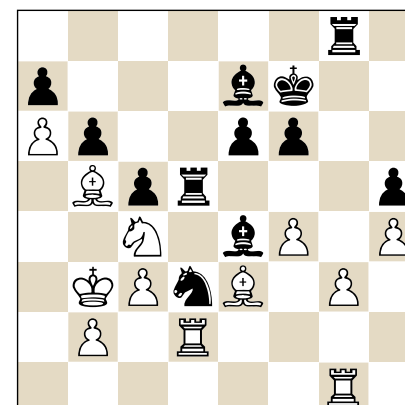
A bit strange, not because White refuses the exchange, but because he forgets to take his bishop to b7. Of course, that's only because he wants to avoid any counterplay based on ...b5.

30...♞g8 31.♞d2 ♞gd8!

My moves until the time-control were aimed at preventing the knight moving from c4, mainly because I had little time to reach move 40 and really wanted the extra hour to figure out what to do next.

32.♞e3

32.♞a3?? hits on 32...c4+.

32...♞e4 33.♞d2 ♞g8**34.♞a4**

Maybe intended to scare me, but I didn't see how White would get his king to b5.

After 34.♞a3 c4+ (better 34...♞gd8! 35.♞gd1 f5 36.♞c4 ♞5d7 37.♞b5 ♞f3! 38.♞a1 ♞e4, and it turns out that here the b5-knight is not much of a nuisance, since the d3-knight is solidly incrustated in White's position

Magnus very likely saw the right move, but he wanted a more straightforward win in which I didn't have any alternative. Alas for him, he had missed one...

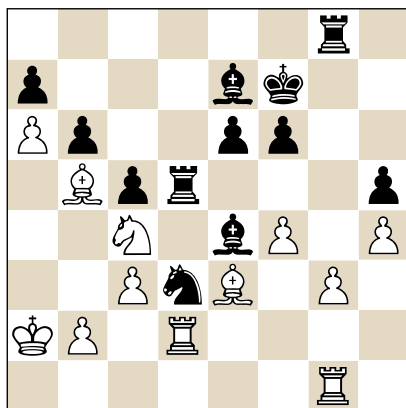
in return) 35. ♖xc4 ♜xg3! was the shot I had in mind. Nevertheless, it only partially works, because I had missed the following: 36. ♕xd3! (36. ♜xg3?? ♖c1+ 37. ♖a4 ♜a5 mate; 36. ♜xd3 ♜xg1 37. ♜xd5 exd5 38. ♕xg1 dxc4+ 39. ♖xc4 ♕f5 40. ♖b5 ♕c8, with equality) 36... ♜xe3 37. ♕xe4 ♜xd2 38. ♕g6+ ♖f8 39. ♖c4 ♜ee2 40. ♖xd2 ♜xd2, and White keeps the upper hand. It is hard to determine whether the position is winning for White or a draw if both sides start playing optimally from here.

34... ♜gd8 35. ♖b3

After 35. ♕c6 ♜d4! 36. cxd4 ♕xc6+ 37. ♖b3, 37... b5! would yield Black enough counterplay: 38. ♜xd3 bxc4+ 39. ♖xc4 ♕d5+ 40. ♖c3 c4 41. ♜d2 ♜b8 42. ♖c2 ♜b3, and Black is at least quite OK. My pieces are so active that they at least compensate for the invested material.

35. ♖a3 would once again fail: 35... c4! 36. ♖xc4 ♜xb5 37. ♖xb5 ♜d5+ 38. ♖a4 (38. ♖c6 ♜c5+) 38... b5+.

35... ♜g8 36. ♖a2



36... f5!? This was an idea I had had in mind for a long time, as I felt that if I could get in ... ♕f6 and ... e6-e5 at the right time, I would not only be safe but might even think about taking over in the future.

37. ♜h2

Not 37. ♖a3? ♜xg3 38. ♜xg3 ♖c1+.

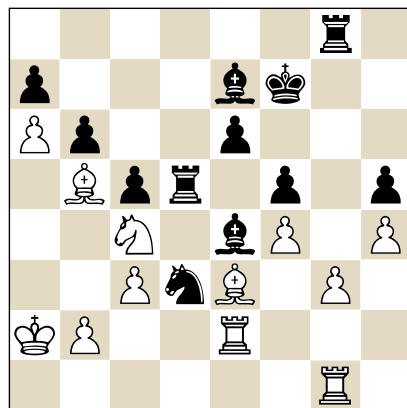
37... ♜c8 38. ♜d2

38. ♖a3? c4 would again work very well for Black after 39. ♕xc4 ♜a5.

38... ♜g8

38... ♕f6!? 39. ♜gd1 ♜cd8 was certainly a safer option. I discounted it, because I had missed that ♖a3 was still impossible for White: 40. ♖a3?! ♕f3 41. ♜f1 ♖b4+! 42. cxb4? ♜xd2 43. ♕xd2 ♜xd2 44. ♜xf3 ♜xb2+.

39. ♜e2



39... ♕f3?!

I slip right before move 40.

I had completely forgotten about 39... ♕xh4, but probably wouldn't have played it anyway, since 40. ♜h2 ♕xg3 41. ♜xh5 ♜g7 42. ♜h8 looks very dangerous for Black. However, things peter out to a draw after 42... ♕xf4 43. ♜a8 ♜d7! 44. ♕xd7 ♕xa8 45. ♕xe6+ ♖f6 46. ♜xg7 ♖xg7 47. ♕xf5 ♕xe3 48. ♖xe3.

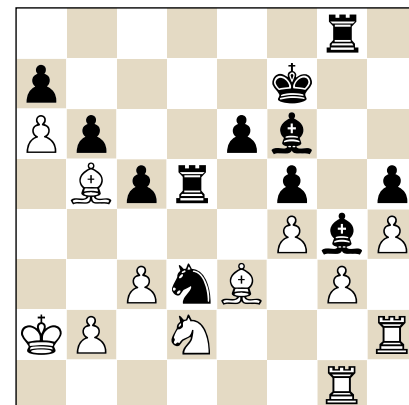
39... ♜c8! was my first intention, but then I felt 39... ♕f3 was easier, walking right into Magnus' trap.

40. ♜h2! ♕f6?!

40... ♕e4! was still alright, but a very difficult move to make at move 40: 41. ♕c6 (41. ♖d2 c4! 42. ♕xc4 ♜a5+ 43. ♖b3 ♖c5+) 41... ♜dd8! 42. ♕xe4 fxe4 43. ♖d2 ♖g6 44. ♖xe4 ♖f5, and

Black gets decent compensation for the pawn.

41. ♖d2 ♕g4



42. ♜f1!

At first I thought my bishop controlling d1 would be enough, but then it dawned on me there wasn't anything constructive I could do, since both my ♕g4 and ♖d3 were stuck.

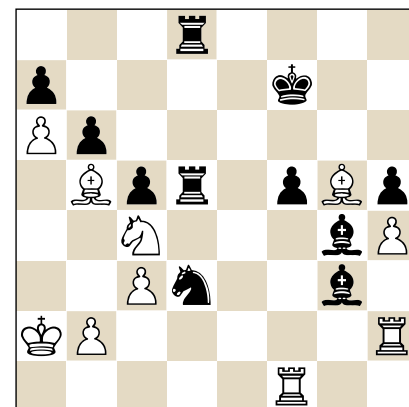
42... ♜gd8 43. ♖c4 e5

The only try. Passivity leaves me doomed: 43... ♖g6 44. ♕c6 ♜b8 45. ♜d2 ♜dd8 46. ♖a3!, and the threat of ♖b5 is devastating.

44. fxe5 ♕xe5

44... ♖xe5 45. ♕f4! would be bad, since ♖e3 is a serious threat. Still, there was a fighting chance that I had missed: 45... ♖g7 46. ♖e3 would allow 46... c4! 47. ♖xd5 ♜xd5 48. ♕xe5 ♕xe5 49. ♕xc4 ♜a5+ 50. ♖b3 ♕xg3 51. ♜d2 f4, with decent drawing chances.

45. ♕g5 ♕xg3



46. ♜g2?

Magnus very likely saw the right move, but he wanted a more straightforward win in which I didn't have any alternative. Alas for him, he had missed one...

Correct was 46. ♜d2! ♖e6 (46...

Celeb 64

John Henderson



Felix Magath

A new football season is once again upon us, so what better time to acknowledge yet another legendary football manager who plays chess: Felix Magath, who as a midfield dynamo for Hamburg scored the winner in the 1983 European Cup final, and also played in the German team that lost to Argentina in the 1986 World Cup final.

Magath once described chess as being the second best game ever after football. He took up the game in 1978 after a lengthy hospital convalescence, and captivated after watching TV coverage of the Karpov-Kortchnoi World Championship match in Baguio City. He then hired a teacher to help improve his board skills and joined his local Hamburg chess club.

As he improved, his chess prowess won him the chance to play his new hero, Garry Kasparov, in a charity chess simultaneous in 1985 not long after the then 22-year-old had defeated Anatoly Karpov to become world champion. 'Kasparov was a nice guy who likes football and he let me play 30 moves or something,' Magath wryly said to the press afterwards.

And when he became a manager – with spells as head coach at Hamburg, Stuttgart, Bayern Munich, Fulham, and currently in China with Shandong Luneng – he was quick to see the analogy. 'Chess is like football. If the pieces, like the players, can work together it becomes an effective team. That's what I am always looking for in football.' ■

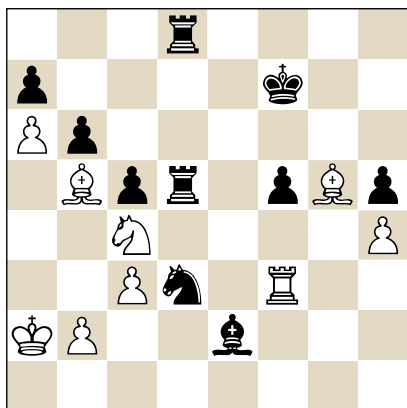
f4 47. ♖xd8 ♜xd8 48. ♜xd3 ♜xd3 49. ♘e5+) 47. ♖a3!. An important move, since White is now threatening 48. ♘e3. Again, my pieces are stuck to each other and could fall one by one, since I don't have time to launch counterplay: 47...f4 48. ♘xb6! axb6 49. ♖c4! b5 50. ♖xd5+ ♜xd5 51.a7, and White wins.

46... ♖h3 47. ♜xg3 ♖xf1 48. ♜f3? Still under the impression that I didn't have a choice, Magnus didn't recheck his calculations, which proved to be the decisive mistake.

After 48. ♖xd8 ♜xd8 49. ♜f3 ♖e2 50. ♜xf5+ ♖g6 51. ♜g5+ ♖f6 the game would end in a draw, but understandably that wasn't Magnus' idea.

48... ♖e2!

Not, of course, 48... ♖g2? 49. ♜xd3 ♜xd3 50. ♘e5+.



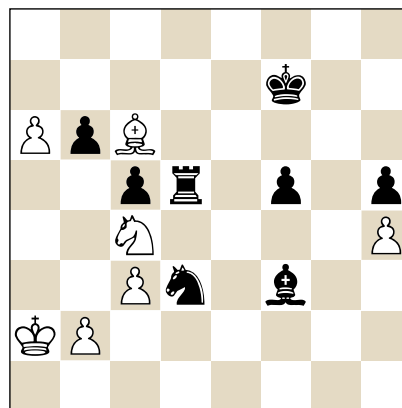
49. ♖xd8

By now he had seen it. After 49. ♜e3, 49...f4! was the move Magnus had missed, because now my bishop becomes untouchable!: 50. ♜e7+ ♖g6 51. ♜xa7 ♜xg5 52. hxc5 f3, and Black gets his pawn to fantasyland first! 49. ♜xd3!? was a clever try, when I feel the most accurate way for Black to play would be 49... ♖xd3!? (49... ♜xd3 50. ♘e5+ ♖e6 51. ♘g6! would be a nice way for White to keep some hope, using the fact that all my pieces are under fire: 51... ♜d6 52. ♘f4+ ♖e5 53. ♘xe2 ♜f3 54. ♖e8, with some drawing chances) 50. ♖xd8 ♜xd8 51. ♘e5+ ♖f6 52. ♘xd3 ♜g8!, and here it is White's turn to worry about the pawns on the kingside. There is no way to get access to the a7-pawn in time.

49... ♖xf3 50. ♖xb6

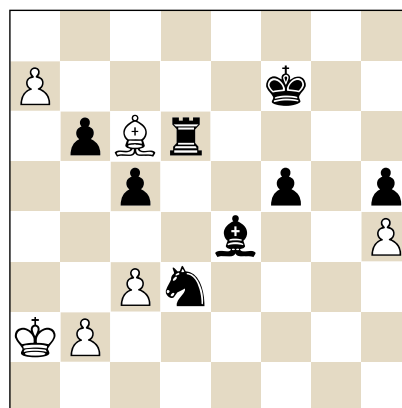
50. ♖c7 was another try that I didn't look at. White seems to be too slow after, for instance, 50...f4 51. ♖b8 ♖e2 52. ♖xa7 f3 53. ♖xb6 f2 54.a7 (54. ♘e3 ♘c1+) 54...f1 ♜ 55.a8 ♜ ♘b4+! 56.cxb4 ♖xc4+, with mate to follow.

50... axb6 51. ♖c6



51... ♖e4! My first intention was 51...b5?. I finally rejected it, but not for the right reason!: 52.a7 ♜d8 53. ♖xf3 bxc4 54. ♖xh5+!. I had completely forgotten about this move. I looked at 54.a8 ♜ ♜xa8+ 55. ♖xa8 ♘e5 56. ♖b1 f4 57. ♖c2 ♖f6 58. ♖e4, feeling that White had better drawing chances here, since the pawn on c4 could easily be attacked, compared to where it was (on b6) in the game.

52.a7 ♜d8 53. ♘d6+ ♜xd6



54. ♖xe4

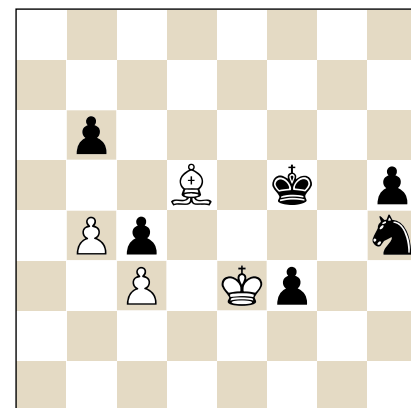
After 54.a8 ♜ ♜xc6 55. ♜h8, even if White managed to get the h5-pawn, the queen wouldn't have enough firepower to fight three well-coordinated pieces: 55...f4! 56. ♜xh5+ ♖e7, and the f-pawn marches on.

54... ♜d8 55.a8 ♜ ♜xa8+ 56. ♖xa8 ♘e5 57. ♖b3 f4 58. ♖c2 ♖g7



tions are then very easy to figure out. Instead, 63...♔g5? 64.bxc5 bxc5 65.♙d5 ♔g4 66.♙f2 ♔f4 67.♙f7 is an easy draw.

64. ♙d5 ♔f5



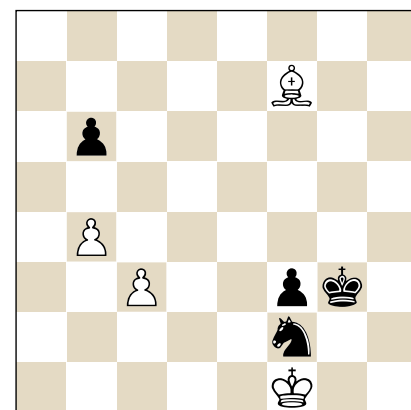
65. ♙xc4

After 65.♙f2 ♔f4 66.♙f7 the same defensive plan doesn't work, because there are too many pawns on the queenside: 66...♖f5 67.♙xh5 ♖g3 68.♙xf3 ♖e4+ 69.♙xe4 (69.♙e2 ♖xc3+ 70.♙d2 would be a draw in the absence of b-pawns) 69...♙xe4 70.♙e2 b5!, and Black wins.

65... ♙g4 66. ♙f2 ♖g6 67. ♙e6+ ♙f4 68. ♙f7 ♖e5 69. ♙xh5 ♖d3+ 70. ♙f1 ♙g3

70...♙e3 was probably easier, to simply collect the pawns on the queenside. But my idea was to take away the g2-square from the king, so that it would be much harder for White to react against pawn-promoting threats, because the king would hinder the bishop from controlling the f1-square.

71. ♙f7 ♖f2



Magnus resigned in view of 72.♙e1 ♖e4 73.♙c4 f2+ 74.♙e2 ♖xc3+ 75.♙e3 ♖d5+!.

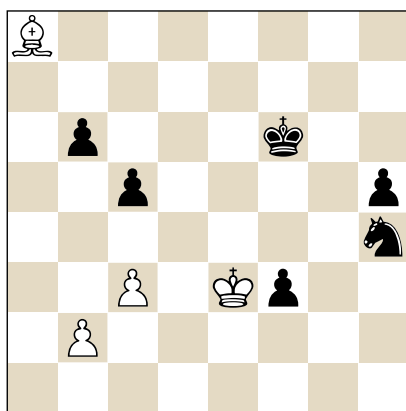
58...♔g6! was even simpler, since after 59.♙e4+ ♔h6 Black's king gets to g5.

59. ♙d2 ♖g6 60. ♙d3 ♖xh4 61. ♙e4 f3?

A hasty decision that could easily have cost me half a point.

The obvious shot I had missed was 61...♖g6! 62.♙f5 f3, after which White is helpless.

62. ♙e3 ♙f6

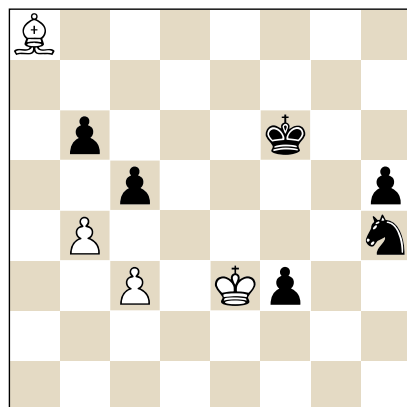


63. b4!?

A good practical try.

I felt that after 63.♙b7 ♔g5 64.♙c8 ♖g6! 65.♙xf3 ♖e5+ my position

was winning. With the knight on e5, White can't exchange pawns on the queenside, meaning that either my h-pawn will run or my king will collect both pawns!: 66.♙g3 (66.♙e4 ♖c4 67.b4 ♖d6+; 66.♙e2 ♙f4) 66...♖c4 67.b4 ♖d6, winning a second pawn and the game.



63...c4!

My luck was that the win still exists! This move didn't take me much time, because it felt mandatory to keep more pawns on the queenside, and it is the only move that could possibly manage that. The varia-



NOTES BY

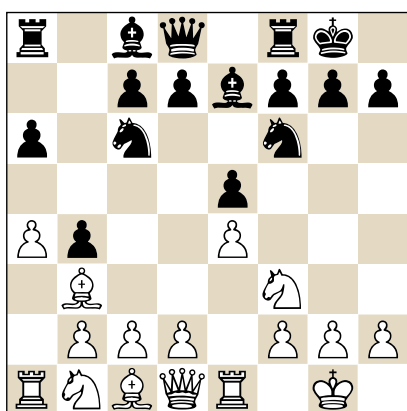
Peter Heine Nielsen**Magnus Carlsen****Levon Aronian**

St. Louis 2017 (9)

Ruy Lopez, Anti-Marshall Attack

For quite a while, the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis saw a dominating Magnus Carlsen play some of his best chess, at least that is the positive side of a story that also includes two blunders that cost the World Champion 1½ points. Nevertheless, at the start of the final round, first place was still in sight, since he was just half a point behind the three leaders (Anand, Aronian and Vachier-Lagrave) and would meet one of them in a direct encounter.

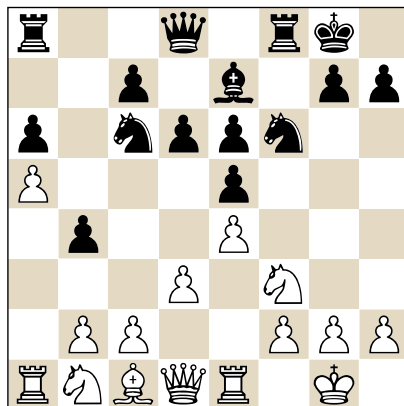
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.a4 b4



It would be normal to describe this as a typical anti-Marshall structure and the two players even had experience with it dating back to their Candidates' match 10 years ago. However, in this tournament this structure arose twice via 3.♙c4, exemplifying the strategic overlap between the Italian and the Ruy Lopez these days. **9.a5!?** Earlier this year, Magnus tried 9.d3 against Aronian in Karlsruhe, but despite achieving a winning position, he now decides to be the first to deviate.

9...d6 10.d3 ♙e6 11.♙xe6 fxe6 Magnus unsuccessfully battled this pawn structure in Stavanger as White

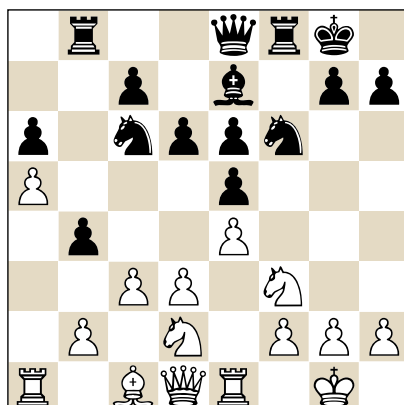
against So and Giri via the Italian. Here, however, the black bishop is on e7, making a black Giri-style attack down the f-file more unlikely.



12.♘bd2 ♖b8 13.c3

A position of some interest at top level. Wojtaszek has tried ...♖b5 with and without including ...bxc3, but Aronian chooses to follow the move that Adams played against Topalov.

13...♙e8

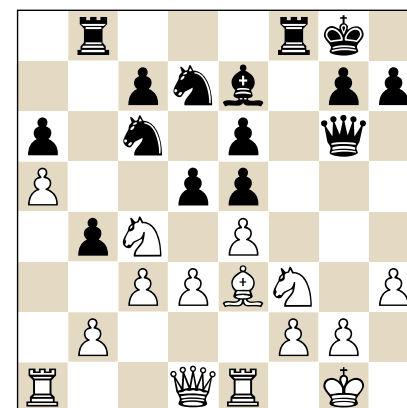


14.♘c4!?

Topalov played 14.d4, but Magnus's understanding of the position is different. He is not seeking to change the pawn structure, but believes the current situation to favour White, with Black having no obvious way to improve his position, while White quietly finishes his development.

14...♙g6 15.h3 ♘d7 16.♙e3 d5!? An interesting move, and obvi-

ously the point of Black's previous moves. White has to retreat.

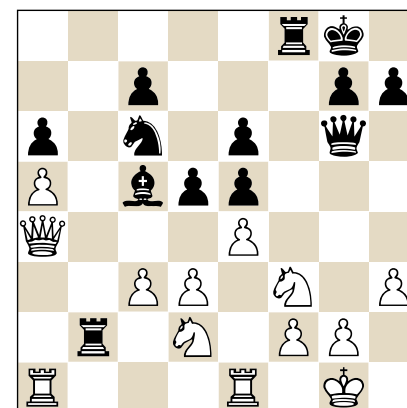


17.♘cd2

In many ways, Black's position looks appealing, but the relevant question is: what to do with it? 17...♙c5 looks logical, but with the simple reply 18.♙xc5 ♘xc5 19.♙e2 White keeps a strategic edge, since 19...bxc3 20.bxc3 ♖b2 21.♖eb1! nullifies Black's activity while leaving him with strategic weaknesses. The computer suggests 17...♖b7 18.♙a4 ♘db8, but being human, Aronian obviously tries to fight for the initiative instead.

17...bxc3?! 18.bxc3 ♘c5?! 19.♙xc5! ♙xc5 20.♙a4 ♖b2!?

Black stays loyal to his plan, the point being 21.♙xc6? ♙xf2+!, with a winning attack.

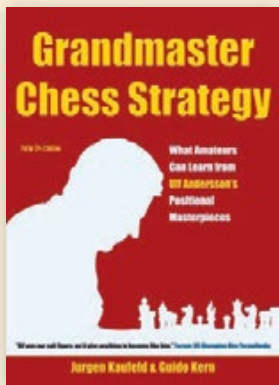


21.♖f1!

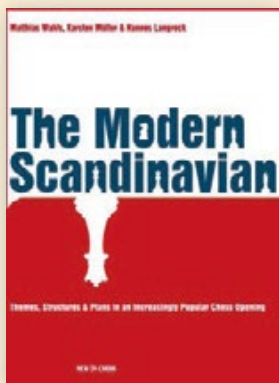
Ostensibly a sadly passive move, its only function being the safeguarding

‘For quite a while, the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis saw a dominating Magnus Carlsen play some of his best chess.’

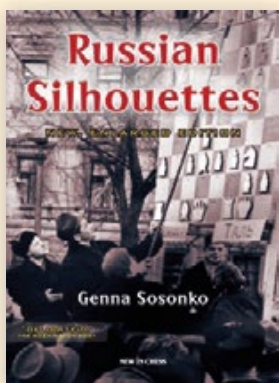
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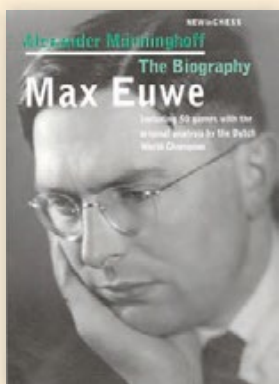
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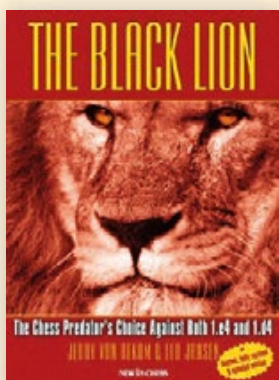
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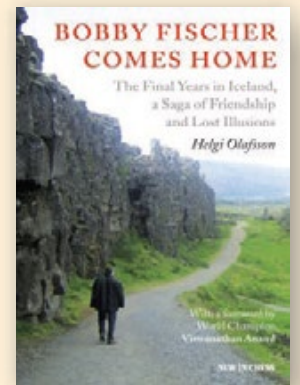


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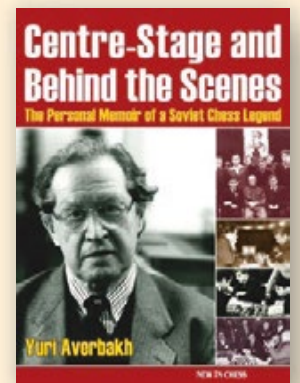


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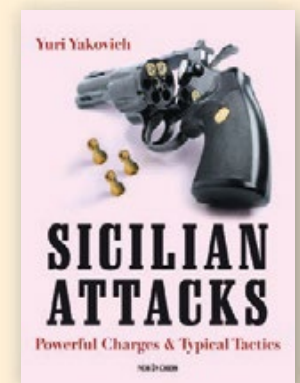
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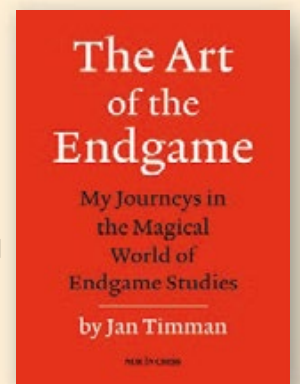
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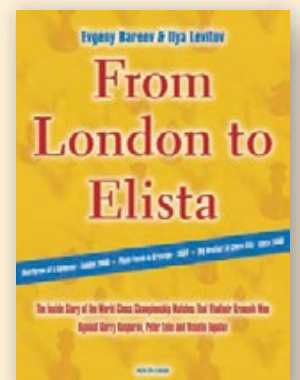
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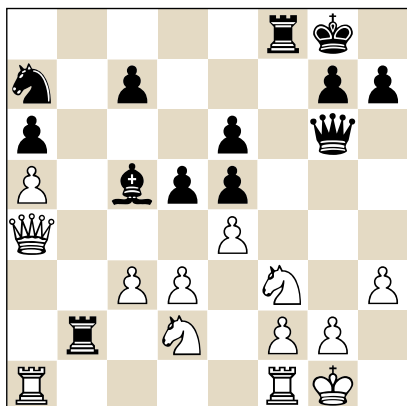


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of the f2-pawn. However, the underlying theme of the game is White's better structure versus Black's initiative. Aronian could, and probably should, have admitted strategic defeat and gone passive with 21...♔e8. Instead, true to his style, he aims for a creative yet abortive attack.

21...♘a7!?

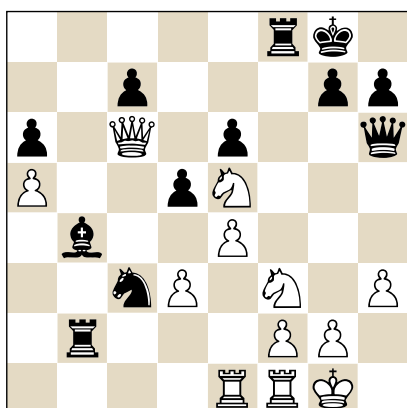


22.♞xe5

22.♞ab1 was also possible, but when you can grab a pawn, and don't see any compensation for your opponent, why not indeed?

22...♔h6 23.♞df3 ♘b5 24.♞ae1! ♞xc3 25.♔c6 Black has temporarily won back the pawn, but White's queen attacks the undefended parts of Black's position, forcing the bishop to leave the a7-g1 diagonal to keep the c3-knight protected.

25...♞b4



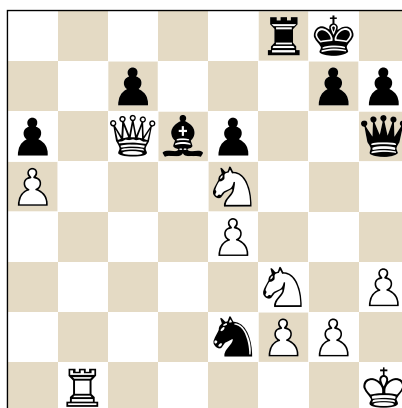
26.♞h1!? 26.♞d7 was also winning, but in a much more concrete way. In this manner White basically states that his kingside position is now an impregnable fortress, while his queen will do considerable damage on the queenside.



AUSTIN FULLER

A light-hearted moment at the opening ceremony. Henrik Carlsen explains to his wife Sigrun what Magnus and his second Peter Heine Nielsen are laughing about.

26...dxe4 27.dxe4 ♞e2 28.♞b1!
Exchanging off Black's active rook.
28...♞xb1 29.♞xb1 ♞d6

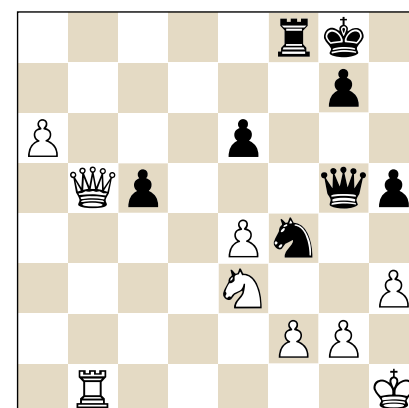


30.♔xa6

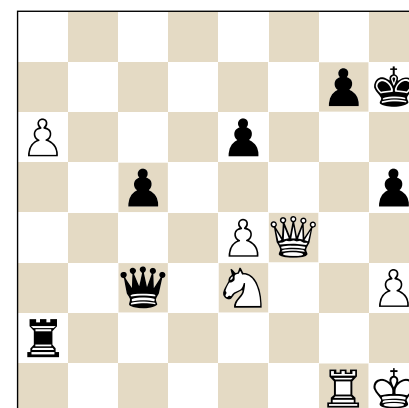
A tad greedy. 30.♞g4, with the idea of 30...♔h5 31.e5 and 30...♔g6 31.♞fe5! would have been even better, but White's position is still winning.

30...♞f4 31.♔b5 c5?! This hastens the end, but the endgame after 31...♞xe5 32.♞xe5 ♔g5 33.♞g4! ♔xb5 34.♞xb5 was winning for White anyway.

32.a6 ♞xe5 33.♞xe5 ♔g5 34.♞g4 h5 35.♞e3

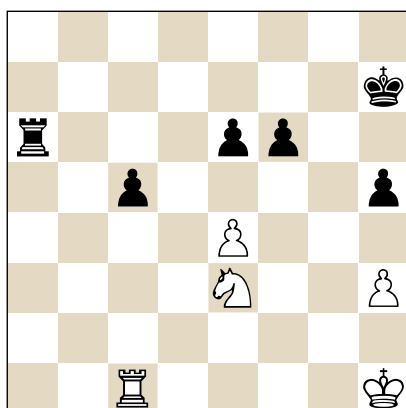


35...♞xg2!? A last try in mutual time-trouble. **36.♞xg2 ♞xf2 37.♞g1 ♞h7** Now the threat of 38...♔g3 is real, but simple to parry. **38.♔d3! ♔e5 39.♔e3 ♞a2 40.♔f4 ♔c3 41.♞e3**



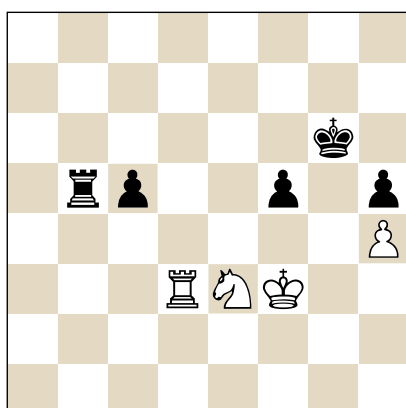
The time-control has been reached, and with White's king now totally safe, Aronian's final try is a piece-down endgame with slight hopes of exchanging White's last pawns.

41... ♖f6!? 42. ♖xf6 gxf6 43. ♖c1 ♖xa6



44. ♔g2! Of course. 44. ♖xc5 ♖a3! would drop the h3-pawn. Instead White patiently brings up the king, leaving Black no hope.

44... ♖a2+ 45. ♖c2 ♖a5 46. ♔f3 ♔g6 47. h4 ♖b5 48. ♖a2 ♖b1 49. ♖c2 ♖b5 50. ♖c3 f5 51. exf5+ exf5 52. ♖d3



And because his pawns start dropping with no hope of he himself winning White's pawn on h4, Aronian resigned.

Magnus has managed various almost impossible comebacks in his career, but this time it was not to be, since meanwhile, MVL had won his game against Ian Nepomniachtchi. Hats off to the Frenchman for his well-deserved victory. The rivalry with the Norwegian in the Grand Chess Tour will now come down to a photo-finish in the final stage in London in December. Game on!



NOTES BY

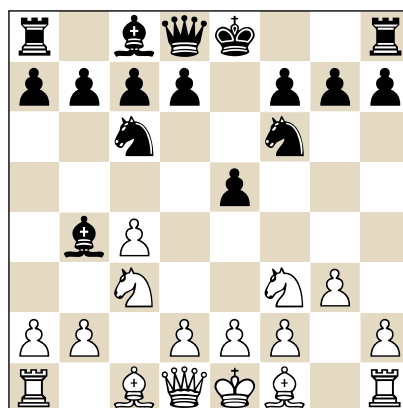
Levon Aronian**Hikaru Nakamura****Levon Aronian**

St. Louis 2017 (7)

English Opening,
Four Knights Variation**1.c4**

This game was played in the 7th round, and before this I had achieved a quick success against So, whereas after a lengthy defence Hikaru had saved a difficult game against Carlsen.

1... ♖f6 2. ♖c3 e5 3. ♖f3 ♖c6 4.g3 ♖b4



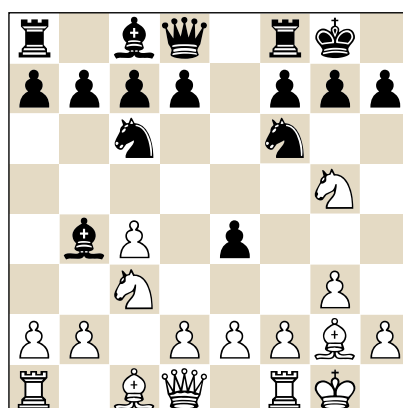
Despite the fact that I more often choose 4...d5, in this game I wanted to go in for more complicated play.

5. ♖g2

Very dangerous for Black is 5. ♖d5, which sometimes leads to difficulties for even the strongest players.

5...0-0 6.0-0 e4 7. ♖g5

The most critical. Black has few problems in achieving equality after both 7. ♖e1 and 7. ♖h4.

**7... ♖xc3 8.bxc3**

8.dxc3 has not been popular in recent times, although there is a certain point to it.

8... ♖e8 9.f3 e3

Many players have stopped playing this, preferring 9...exf3, and largely for this reason I decided on this move, forgotten by the Gods.

10.d3

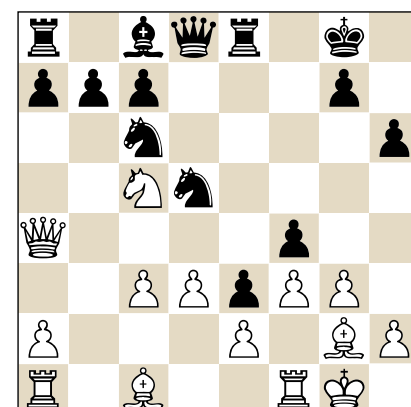
10.dxe3 is also possible, but I was sure that, in accordance with his style, Nakamura would go in for the most fighting variation.

10...d5 11. ♖a4

A move which has mainly been tested in correspondence games. 11. ♖b3 and 11.cxd5 are more common.

11...h6

Following the Svidler-Karjakin game from the 2016 Candidates Tournament.

12.cxd5 ♖xd5 13. ♖e4 f5 14. ♖c5 f4

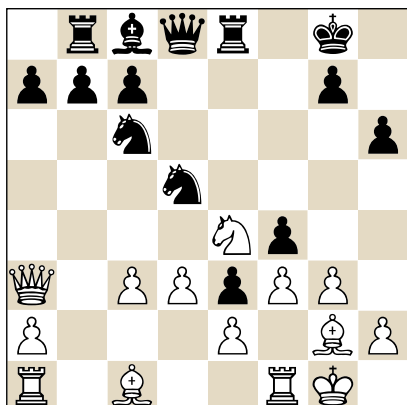
The key position of this variation. Complicated and interesting play arises in all the lines. The blockade of the g2-bishop is maintained largely because for the moment White is unable to occupy the centre with his pawns and take squares away from the black knights. Black must be on the alert, in order after c4 always to have the manoeuvre ...♖de7-f5, restraining the d4 advance, and after d4 to have ...b5, stabilizing the position of the knight on d5.

15. ♖e4

Piotr Veniaminovich played 15. ♖b2, to which Karjakin, the new discoverer of this variation, replied ...♖b8. Generally speaking, in this set-up the move ...♖b8 can be made automati-

cally. The bishop on c8 stands ideally, and for this reason the a8-rook is developed via ...b5-b4 or ...b5/...♖b6, with the potential switching of the rook to g6.

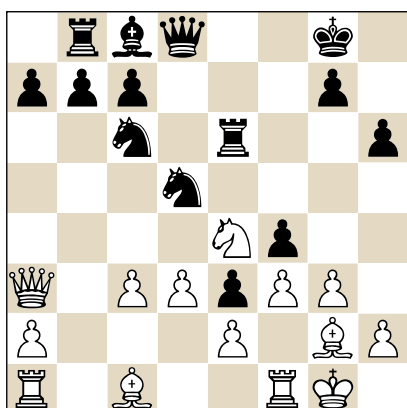
15...♖b8 16. ♖a3



White prepares to meet the ...b5 advance with ♖c5. White must endeavour to create the threat of gxf4, in order not to allow Black to develop calmly. In view of the fact that the move in the game does not lead to an advantage, the more natural 16.♖b1 can be recommended for White. Please feel welcome!

16...♖e6

A correct and timely move, on which I spent 10 minutes. The rook must be ready if necessary to go to g6.



17.c4

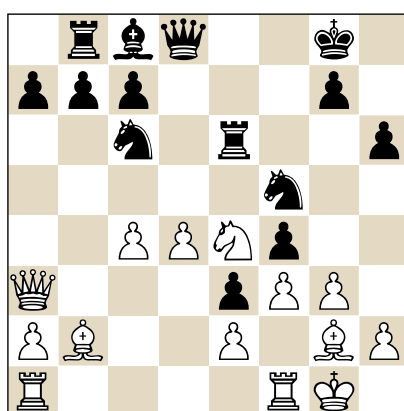
A logical continuation, which leads to simplification. It is not possible to cut the Gordian knot by 17.gxf4, since after 17...♖g6 18.♗g3 ♖h4 19.f5 ♖xg3 20.hxg3 ♖xg3 21.♖b3 ♗e6 22.♗xe3 there is the strong move 22...♗f7, when after 23.♗f2 ♖g5 White loses material.

17...♗de7 18. ♗b2 ♗f5 19.d4



Immediately after his brilliant win against Hikaru Nakamura, a delighted Levon Aronian joined Maurice Ashley in the television studio to share his first impressions.

The correct decision. It is important not to allow Black to set up a blockade.



19...♗cxd4

Conservative and solid. It was possible to pick up a pawn after 19...fxg3 20.hxg3 ♖g6 21.g4 ♗fxd4 22.♖d3 b5, with a slight advantage for Black, but I did not want to activate the bishop on g2. The move in the game gives Black a pleasant position.

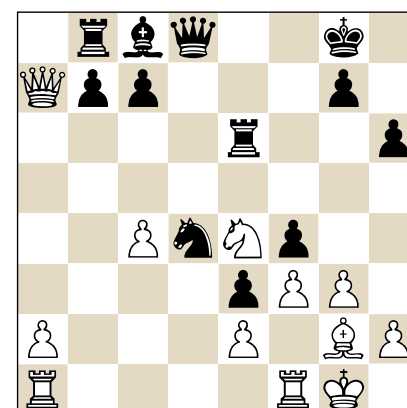
20. ♗xd4

If 20.♖d3, then 20...b5 is very strong, and because of concrete threats

White is unable to rid himself of the knight domination.

20...♗xd4 21. ♖xa7

If 21.♖ad1 I had prepared the strong 21...b6, which, thanks to the threat of ...c5 with the reinforcement of the knight in its strong position, gives Black the advantage.



21...♗c6

On this natural move I spent 40 minutes. I liked the position after 22... ♖f8, but just in case I decided to study 21...♗xe2+. In my calculations I reached a better position for Black after 22.♗h1 ♗d7 23.♖fe1 ♖a8



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The Scandinavian is a rarely employed opening at the highest level and guides your opponent on much less familiar terrain than for example the Sicilian, French or any 1.e4 e5 system. This rareness leads to a slow evolution of theory. After 1.e4 d5 Black fights for the initiative from move one on without any precedent manoeuvring. The Scandinavian is a reasonable and underestimated opening. It enables Black to alternate between a wild or a more restrained game, having attained a solid position and excellent control over the white squares. Don't hesitate long and make the Scandinavian your opening weapon against 1.e4!

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It's a problem every player encounters when he stands better in a game: how to convert his plus into a full point? In this DVD the author answers this difficult question of chess strategy, considering both the psychological aspects of the realisation of an advantage and the technical methods. Several issues are taken into account and carefully explained: selecting the correct plan, the importance of the centre and handling a space advantage domination, the principle of two weaknesses, changing the pawn structure, etc. Special attention is paid to the problem of piece exchanges. Recommended for players of all levels and ages.

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It is known that pieces are more difficult to handle than pawns - but sometimes they can help each other, e.g. if it's about conquering a square! But what to do once you have gained control over it? How can the advantage of the new stronghold be exploited? All this and much more is shown on this DVD. More themes: how to create weaknesses, how to conquer and exploit important squares, the powerful helping pawn, piece transfer to strongholds, coordination in the attack.

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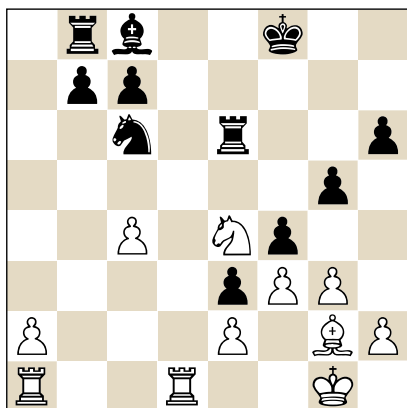
24.♖c5 b6 25.♖d5 c6 26.♖d3 ♜xe4 27.♖xe4 ♜f6, but because of the hanging state of the pieces and fears of overlooking something, I decided to act more solidly. Not the best decision, but from the practical point of view, probably the correct one.

22.♖a3 ♜f8 22...♖e7 was also possible, but I wanted to force White to go into a slightly inferior endgame.

23.♖xf8+ White cannot move his queen away, since after ...♗g6 Black has a fearsome position.

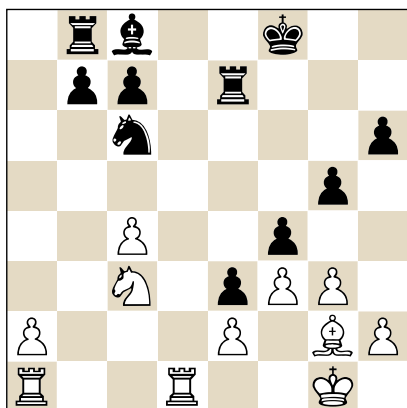
23...♜xf8 24.♗fd1 g5

To be honest, I overestimated White's problems when I went in for this position. The objective assessment is that White is slightly worse, but a draw should be achieved without great difficulty.



25.♜c3 I mainly calculated 25.h4 ♗e5 26.hxg5 hxg5 27.♗d5 ♕e6 28.♗xe5 ♜xe5 29.♜xg5 ♕xc4. I aesthetically liked the fact that, despite the removal of many pieces and pawns from the board, after 30.gxf4 ♜g6 Black maintains a strong blockade.

25...♗e7



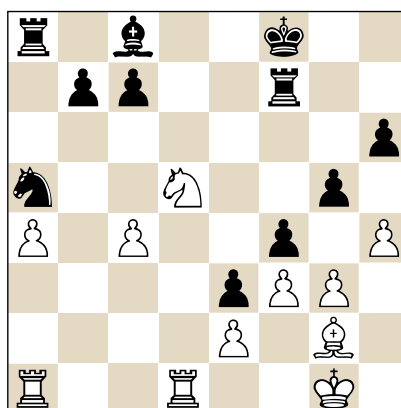
26.♜d5 As Hikaru correctly remarked after the game, this move

‘Here Hikaru saw my idea, but since all the play was aimed at this move, there was no longer any way out.’

was the initial cause of all White's difficulties. It was correct to carry out the plan with h4/♜h2/♕h3 without the knight on d5.

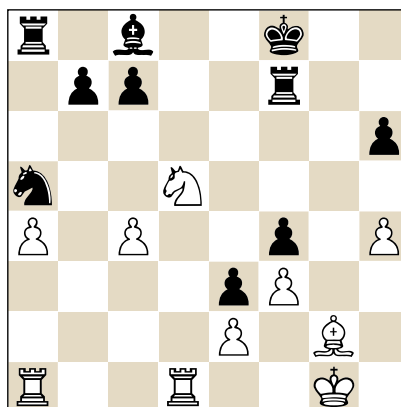
26...♗f7 27.h4 ♗a8 Now, thanks to the fact that the white knight has moved from c3, Black has acquired the unpleasant threat of 28...♗a4.

28.a4 ♜a5



29.gxf4 This move begins an unsuccessful plan of defence. White should have sought salvation in activity, namely the move 29.♗ab1. Now after 29...♜xc4 White has 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.♗b4 c6 32.♜xf4 with the liquidation of many pawns and a quick draw. Possibly Black should simply play 29...♕e6, but after 30.gxf4 gxf4 31.c5 White has good chances of a draw, thanks to the fact that if 31...♗d8 he has the tactic 32.♜xe3.

29...gxf4



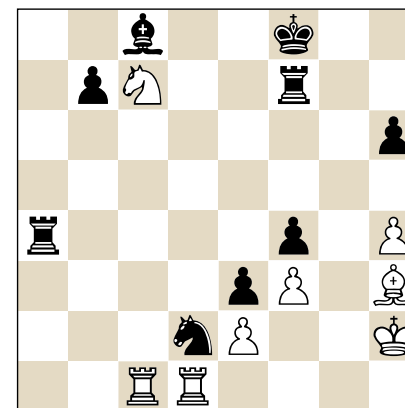
30.♜h2 I think that my opponent missed my 33rd move.

The position after 30.♗ab1 ♜xc4

31.♗b4 c6 32.♗xc4 cxd5 33.♗b4 ♗a5 does not look particularly good, but thanks to the idea ♜h2/♕h3 White retains chances of a draw.

30...♜xc4 31.♗ac1 White should have reconciled himself to the loss of a pawn and continued the fight by 31.♕h3 ♕xh3 32.♜xh3, retaining chances of a draw thanks to the potential weakness of the f4-pawn.

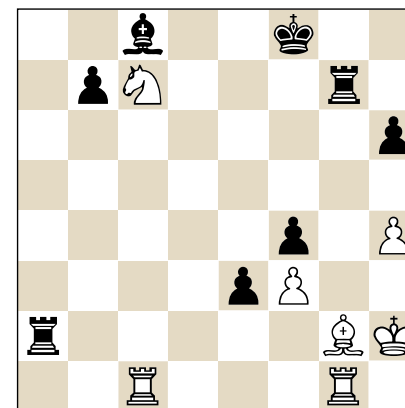
31...♜d2 32.♜xc7 ♗xa4 33.♕h3 Here Hikaru saw my idea, but since all the play beginning from White's 29th move was aimed at this move, there was no longer any way out.



33...♜xf3+

This petite combinaison proves decisive. To be fair, it should be mentioned that Black would also have retained an advantage after 33...♕f5.

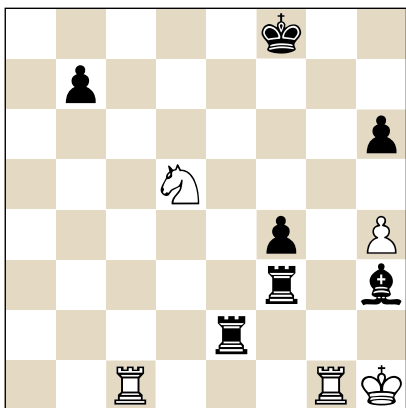
34.exf3 ♗a2+ 35.♕g2 ♗g7 36.♗g1 White would have lost more quickly after 36.♗d8+ ♜e7 37.♗e8+ ♜d7, with the loss of the knight on c7.



36...♗g3

The tactics begun with 33...xf3+ are based on this move, creating a threat of mate by 37...Rh3.

37. Qh1 Qh3 38. Qf1 e2 39. Qxe2 Rxe2 40. Qd5 Rxf3 40...Qg2+ also wins easily, but why give the opponent the chance of a few checks?



41. Rg6

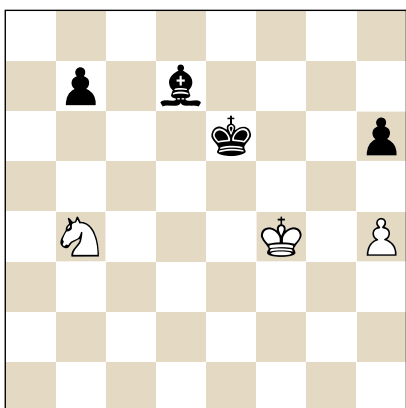
If 41. Rxc4 the simplest is 41...Qf5 42. Qxf4 Re4 43. Rxe4 Qxe4 44. Qg6+ Qg7 and wins.

41...Re6 42. Rcg1 Rxc6

The simplest. The pawn on b7 is too remote, and the minor piece ending is won without difficulty.

43. Rxc6 Qd7 44. Qg2 Rg3+ 45. Rxc3 fxc3 46. Qxc3 Qf7 47. Qf4 Qe6 48. Qb4

After 48. Qe3 the simple 48...Qd6 cuts off the knight.



48...Qe8 It is important first to cut off the white pieces, and only then advance the b-pawn.

49. Qd3 Qd5 50. Qf2 Qd7 51. Qe3 Qe5 52. Qe4 Qc6 53. Qg3 Qd5 54. Qd3 Qf4

With the idea after 55. Qh5+ of playing 55...Qf5 and after Qf7 taking the king up to the h-pawn. White resigned.



NOTES BY

Anish Giri

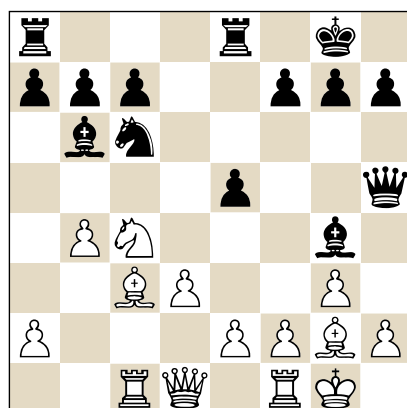
Vishy Anand

Fabiano Caruana

St. Louis 2017 (5)

English, Four Knights System

1.c4 e5 2. Qc3 Qf6 3. Qf3 Qc6 4. g3 d5 5. cxd5 Qxd5 6. Qg2 Qc5 7. 0-0 0-0 8. d3 Qb6 9. Qd2 Qg4 10. Rxc1 Qxc3 11. Qxc3 Re8 12. b4 Qd6?! 13. Qd2 Qh6 14. Qc4 Qh5

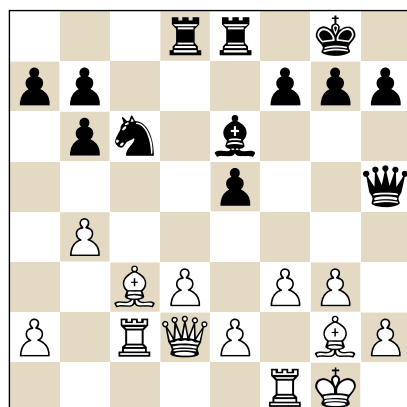


15. Rxc2?!

Caruana's over-ambitious treatment of the English Opening has left him with a suspect position, but with this rather clumsy decision Anand loosens his grip.

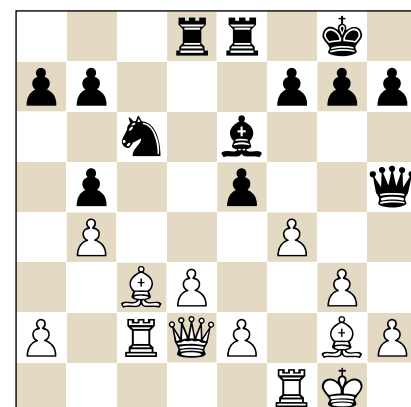
He could have kept it with 15. Re1!, when after 15...Re6 16. Qxb6 axb6 17. b5 Qd4 18. Qxd4 exd4 19. Qd2 White's chances are clearly to be preferred.

15...Rxd8 16. Qxb6 cxb6 17. f3 Qe6 18. Qd2



18...b5 An interesting alternative was 18...Qd4!?, which should also be good enough for equality.

19.f4 At this point, most of the life in the position has vanished, and there is little promise that this game will turn into a brilliancy. Yet the beauty of chess is that, with a combined effort by two players, it is possible to create a study out of absolutely any position.

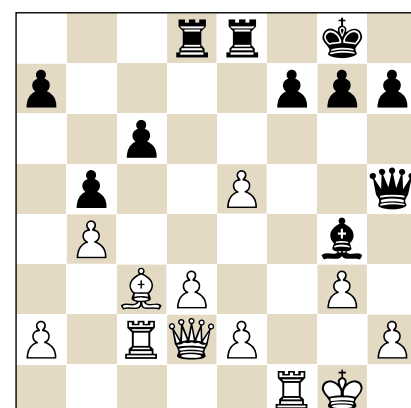


19...Qg4? A temporary pawn sacrifice that makes a lot of positional sense, but some fairly brilliant details were missed by the Italian-American superstar.

19...f6 would have been the simplest way to keep things simple: 20. fxe5 fxe5 21. Qf3 Qg4 22. Qe4 Qe6 23. Rcc1 Qd5, and very little can go wrong.

19...Qh3 is another approach. After 20. Qxh3 Qxh3 21. Qxe5 Qxe5 22. fxe5 Rxe5 23. Rxc7 it seems that White will end up on top, but with a few accurate moves Black gets full compensation for the pawn: 23...f6! 24. Rxb7 Qe6 25. Rf2 a6!, and White's extra pawn is not felt at all, whereas if ...h5-h4 comes, things may even get funky.

20. Qxc6! bxc6 21. fxe5



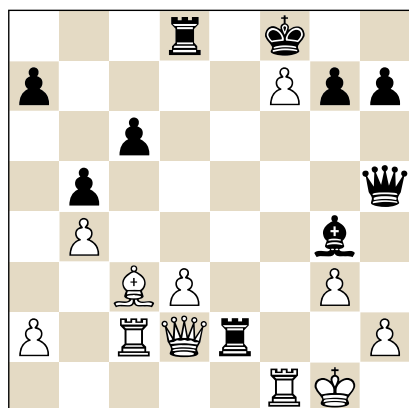
21...f6?



What a beauty! Vishy Anand and Fabiano Caruana discuss how they ended up in a position where the Indian came up with a move that will be remembered for years to come.

By this point, the Indian legend had already seen that this didn't work and was wondering whether Black can play positionally here. Perhaps he could indeed place a rook on e6 and wait, but a pawn is pawn.

22.exf6! ♖xe2 23.f7+ ♔f8



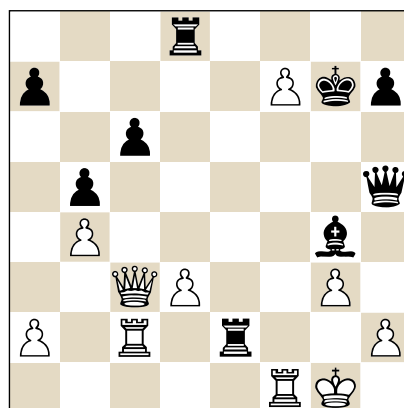
It might seem that Black is doing well. His king appears safe and White has

a mate on h2 and a queen on d2 to take care of. Or had Vishy planned something here?

24. ♕xg7+!

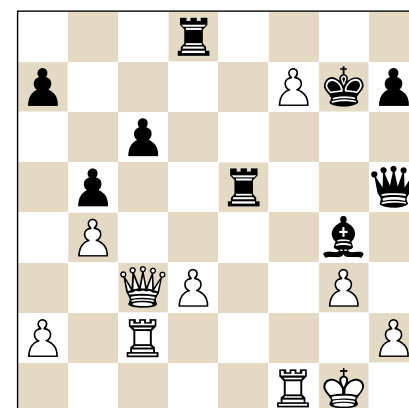
Sure!

24... ♔xg7 25. ♖c3+



25... ♖e5 Deviating from an obvious and forced sequence, but more importantly giving Vishy a chance to

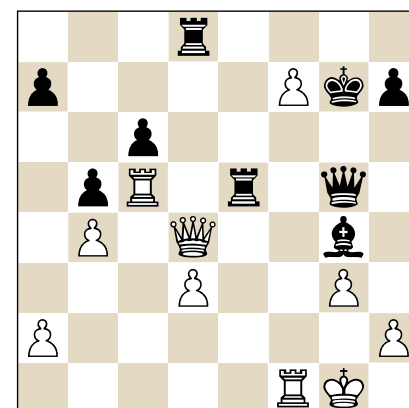
make a move that will be remembered for ages. The Tiger from Madras has got quite a collection of these by now. 25... ♖e5 must have been Fabiano's original intention, if he had one. Now, after a long line, Black reaches what looks like a lost endgame: 26. ♖xe2! ♖xc3 27. ♖e8 ♖d4+ 28. ♖f2 ♖xb4 (the only way to prolong the fight) 29. f8 ♖+ ♖xf8 30. ♖xf8 ♖xd3 31. ♖g8+ ♔f7 32. ♖ef8+ ♔e7 33. ♖a8, and with White a full exchange up, there is not too much hope for Black, although, as Vishy pointed out, there are some technical difficulties.



26. ♖d4!!

Hello!

26... ♖g5 27. ♖c5!



I was never good at the terminology of tactical motifs, especially in the English language (unlike my better half) – pins, overloading, skewers and what not – but this move surely contains most of them.

27... ♖xd4 28. f8 ♖+ ♔g6 29. ♖f7+ and Black resigned. This one left quite an impression, and it was no surprise that Vishy proceeded to fight for first place, finishing on a respectable and unbeaten +2.

‘Deviating from an obvious and forced sequence, but more importantly giving Vishy a chance to make a move that will be remembered for ages.’



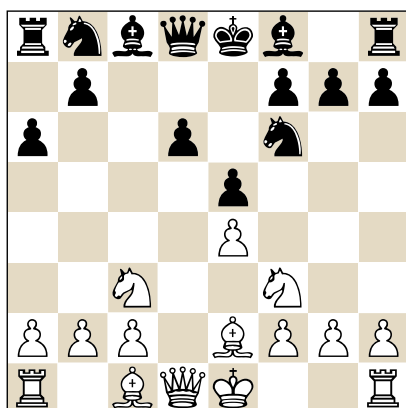
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Ian Nepomniachtchi
St. Louis 2017 (9)
Sicilian, Najdorf Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♖c3 a6

In a game between MVL and Nepo, disregarding all other variables, you can be sure that you'll end up in a Najdorf fight.

6.♕e2 e5 7.♗f3

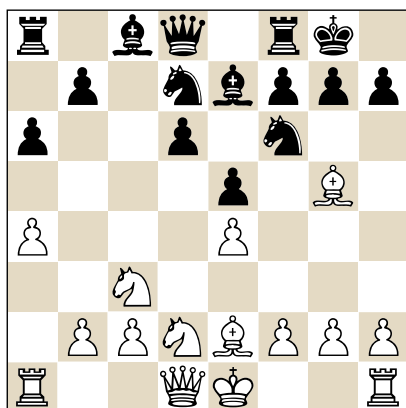


A fresh system (perhaps just a well-forgotten one), introduced into top practice by Magnus Carlsen in Paris. A hybrid between the 6.♕e3 e5 7.♗f3 system and 6.♕e2 e5 7.♗b3. Fascinating.

7...♕e7 8.♕g5 ♗bd7

8...♕e6 9.♕xf6 ♕xf6 is a widely debated theoretical position, with the f3-knight being on b3. Future grand-master practice will tell whom this minor difference favours.

9.a4 0-0 10.♗d2



10...♗c5?

In this game, Black, perhaps unwill-

ingly, follows a blitz game of Ian Nepomniachtchi's from one month ago in which White could get a clear advantage. Confused? So am I.

10...d5 11.exd5 ♗xd5 would change the pawn structure dramatically, but on this day both players seemed determined to turn this game into yet another strategic lesson revolving around the d5-square.

10...h6 11.♕h4 g5 12.♕g3 ♗c5 is another standard approach to such a position.

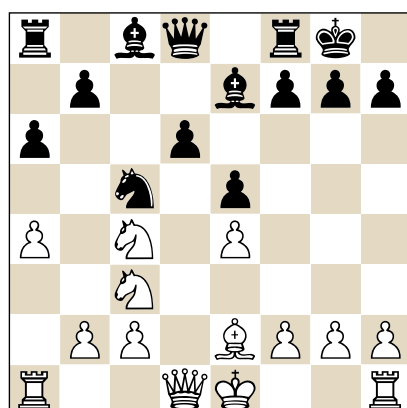
11.♕xf6!

Time to gain full control of the d5-square and leave the knight on c5 without any purpose.

11...♕xf6 12.♗c4 ♕e7

So far we have been following Carlsen-Nepomniachtchi, blitz game, Leuven 2017.

12...♕e6!? is a desperate pawn sacrifice worth considering at this point.

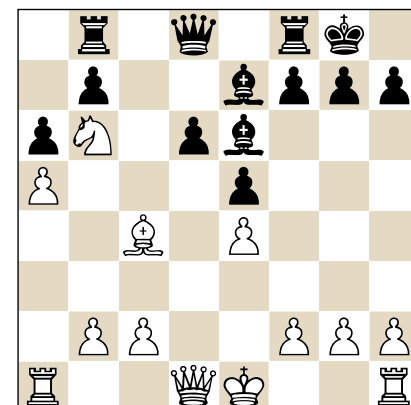


13.a5!

13.0-0 allows 13...♗xe4!, which Black, by the way, didn't play in that aforementioned game. (In that game,

13...♕e6?! 14.a5 gave White full control of the d5-square.)

13...♗b8 14.♗b6 ♗d7 15.♗cd5
♗xb6 16.♗xb6 ♕e6 17.♕c4!



Being a Najdorf player myself, I know that things can go South early on (though ***knock on the wood***, I have not much reason to complain), but still, the last time I saw Black so submissively giving up the d5-square in a high-level game was in the crucial last round of the US Championship 2016 between Eswaran and Abrahamyan. In Tatev's defence, it should be added that she is a 'French' player. Nepo's attorney should probably just plead the Fifth.

17...♗c7 18.♗d3 ♕d8 19.c3!

There is a chance that MVL was still in his preparation, although I doubt he could have anticipated such a scenario in his wildest fantasies. In any case, this move is very precise, leaving Black with absolutely no hope of counterplay, since ...♗c5 will now be met by b4!.

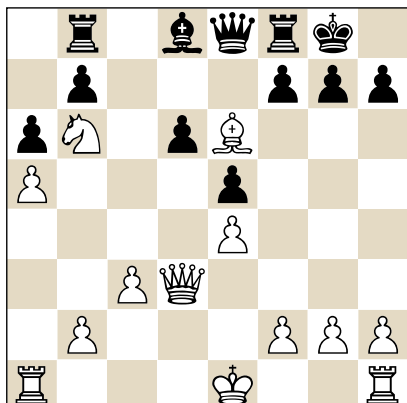
19...♗c6 20.♕d5 ♗e8 21.♕xe6!

With 21...fxe6 not being possible due

St. Louis

St. Louis															cat. XXII	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TPR		
1	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2791	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	6	2912
2	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2822	0	*	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	5½	2864
3	Viswanathan Anand	IGM	IND	2783	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	5½	2868
4	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2773	½	0	½	*	½	1	½	½	½	1	5	2832
5	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2809	½	0	½	½	*	½	0	1	1	1	5	2828
6	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2749	½	½	½	0	½	*	1	½	½	½	4½	2792
7	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2807	½	½	0	½	1	0	*	½	½	½	4	2742
8	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2792	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	*	0	½	3½	2707
9	Ian Nepomniachtchi	IGM	RUS	2742	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	1	*	0	3	2667
10	Wesley So	IGM	USA	2810	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	1	*	3	2660

to the hanging d6-pawn, this last simplification renders White's domination of the d5-square absolute.



21...Kxe6

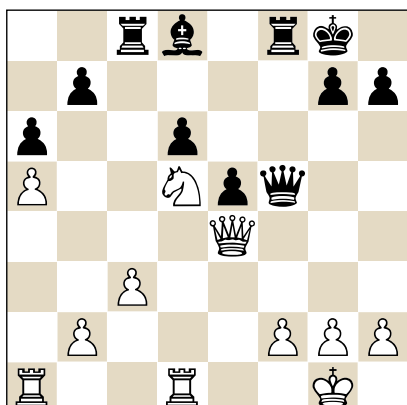
21...Kxb6 22. Qd5 Qa7 felt to me like the lesser evil, but having had a closer look, I changed my mind. Black's position looks strategically lost in both cases. Here the plan of b4-b5 would break through after first 0-0, Kh1, and then perhaps even f2-f4 as a bonus.

22. Qd5

The rest can be done on autopilot. That said, White still has to actually win this beautiful position, and facing the ever resourceful Nepo, this is by no means an easy task.

22...f5 23. 0-0 Qc8 24. Rfd1 fxe4 25. Qxe4 Qf5

Strangely enough, the endgames might be easier for Black to defend than the middlegame, since he can bring his king comfortably to e6, where the king can challenge the d5-square a bit, as well as safeguard the d6-pawn. Don't get me wrong, though, the endgame is awful as well.



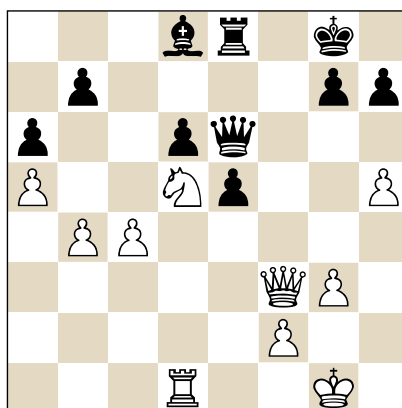
26. Qe2! Kh8 27. c4 Qh4 28. g3 Qg5 29. Ra3!

This rook lift often clinches these Najdorf d5-square knockouts. The rook usually goes to the b3-square, but in this position it can also trade itself via f3, reducing the f-file pressure, which can be a mild nuisance otherwise.

29...Rce8 30. h4

I would have hesitated to play this, but in reality this hardly weakens White's kingside pawn structure and MVL wanted to make the bishop decide on its destiny: the d8-a5 or the h6-c1 diagonal?

30...Qd8 31. b4 Qg6 32. h5 Qf5 33. Ne3 Qe6 34. Rad3 Qe7 35. Nd5 Qd8 36. Rf3 Rxf3 37. Qxf3 Kg8



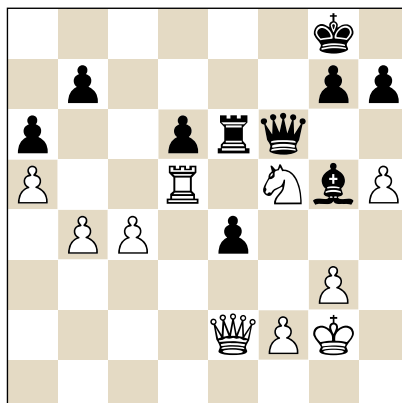
38. Kg2

38. Qe4! is a little more aesthetic, but in the game 38...e4 offers hardly any real counterplay.

38...e4 39. Qe2 Qe5 40. Ne3

The sad part about winning such games is that sooner or later you must regroup the absolutely gorgeous d5-knight in order to actually pick up all the apples that have fallen from the rotten Najdorf tree.

40...Qg5 41. Rd5 Qf6 42. Nf5 Re6

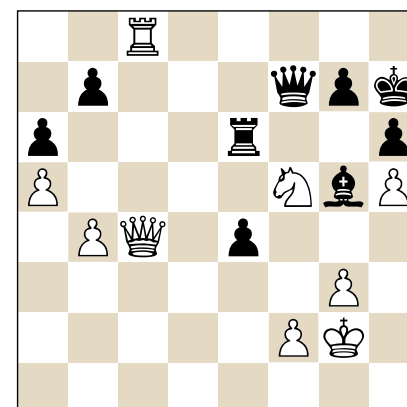


43. c5! This is a clincher. There is almost nothing left of Black's bad pawn structure, but his lack of coordination is now the decisive factor.

43...dxc5 44. Qc4

Le point!

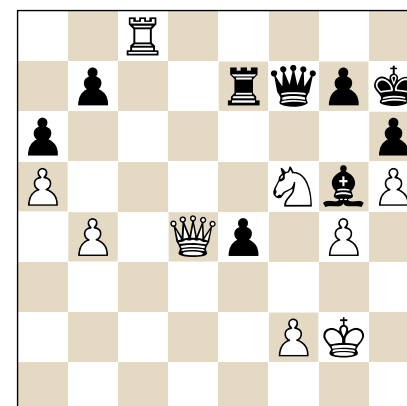
44...Qf7 45. Rxc5 h6 46. Rc8+ Kh7



47. g4

Black is pinned, stalemated and, not to put too fine a point on it, dead lost! To explain why he hesitated for a while before he played his 47th move (see his interview in this issue), MVL gave the line 47. Qd5 e3 48. fxe3 Qxh5 49. Nd4 Qe8 50. Qf5+ Kg8 51. Qe6+ Qf8 52. Qd7, which shows his incredible talent, amongst other abilities, to find mesmerizing lines in places where one wouldn't expect to find them.

47...Re7 48. Qd4



48...Re6

Since 48...Qb3 would lose to 49. Rc3 Qe6 50. Nxe7, as pointed out by MVL.

49. Qd5 g6 50. hxg6+ Qxg6 51. Rf8 Qxf8 52. Qxe6+

Black resigned. A sovereign way for MVL to clinch first place. ■

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave: 'I had the right feeling from the start. I didn't suffer from jet lag and I had plenty of energy for the games.'

'I consider myself a calculator, and a pretty damn good one'

Interview Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

The day of the closing ceremony of the Sinquefield Cup is one for sleeping in. After the final round a bunch of players, including the winner, and other people connected to the tournament had gathered at the 'Chess House' next to the Club for a long and boisterous night of bughouse, blitz, Avalon, booze and, inevitably, lots of trash-talk and heated discussions. I meet Maxime Vachier-Lagrave late in the afternoon at the Chase Park Plaza Hotel, an imposing landmark in the St. Louis Central West End that invariably reminds me of Gotham

City. We find a seat in a quiet part of the lobby, with a view of the gorgeous pool garden that the hotel is famous for. He looks well-rested and relaxed, ready to collect his trophy and the 75,000 dollars winner's check in a couple of hours from now and happy to look back on a special moment in his career.

It was fascinating to watch the end of your game against Nepomniachtchi

It's his biggest victory to date and he is eager for more. At the end of the Sinquefield Cup, **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** talked to 'MVL' about the key moments in St. Louis and his ambitions for the near future. And his beard, of course.

yesterday. You have a winning game and your hand reaches for your queen and goes back, your hand goes there again and again you go back. Several times. Were you calculating variations or telling yourself, please, don't blow this?

'That's a habit I used to have, going for the piece and withdrawing my hand at the last moment. French friends made fun of it and I thought I had given it up. But yesterday, at the

decisive moment, it apparently came back. Of course, the position appears completely winning, but at the same time you don't want to blow it. It was tricky, because there were all sorts of ways with which Black could at least create the illusion of counterplay, perhaps achieving a perpetual. The lines were actually quite deep. I tried five or six times to make the move 45.♔d5 work, and then I saw a line that I didn't like, 45...e3 46.fxe3 ♔xh5, threatening perpetual check. It turns out that this is still winning for White, but the line is actually quite remarkable. Let me give it for the sake of completeness: 47.♘d4 ♕e8, and I stopped there. But there is 48.♔f5+, and now 48...♖h8 49.g4 wins the game, but there is still 48...♖g8, and there are still many wins, but the cleanest one by far is 49.♔e6+ ♖f8, defending the rook, and now 50.♔d7, and the point is that you cannot take the rook, because there is ♘e6+, followed by mate.

'It's actually not such a difficult variation, and if I had seen it, I would probably have considered playing it, because it's forced. But then I realized that none of Black's attempts at counterplay are going to work after 45.g4. And it's a natural move; it protects h5, protects the knight, the knight is beautifully, so after some hesitation I decided on 45.g4. I stopped worrying after I saw 45...♕e7 48.♔d4 ♔b3 49.♕c3 ♔e6, and I just take the rook on e7, and I am winning.

'It was the decisive moment. If I won, I would win the tournament. And if I didn't, who knows what would have happened. So of course I was nervous.'

You knew that if you wanted to avoid a tiebreak against Carlsen, you had to win this game. You had to create winning chances. What was your plan?

'My approach was to find a position in which Ian would feel less comfortable

and I feel I managed that quite nicely with 6.♕e2 and 7.♘f3. It was an idea I had in mind after Magnus played it against me [in the Paris GCT, both in the Rapid and Blitz – DJtG]. I realized that things weren't as clear-cut as a Najdorf player would normally think. You really need accuracy in these positions, otherwise you get what more or less happened in the game.'

Was Nepomniachtchi also an ideal opponent? He was not having a good tournament, might be vulnerable...

'In a sense, yeah, but the thing about Ian is that he is not only very talented obviously, but he is also very tricky.

'I basically never give up'

So it was nice at the beginning of the game, but by the end of the game it was already less nice. But he has this habit of playing too fast. It's a tough thing to control this habit and it really cost him in this tournament. In one or two tournaments he has managed to keep this under control, but here old demons came out to chase him again.'

Is this your biggest tournament victory to date?

'In a sense it is. I hope it's one of many to come, but there's never any guarantees. This is the life of any athlete, you have to take your chances when they come. You may think you have plenty of time, and we are not subject to injuries like other athletes, but still we can be subject to a loss of motivation. Or a feeling that the amount of work you put in is too much and you may start looking in different directions. It's a lot of fun to be a sportsman, and all in all I like it. I wish to keep on doing this for a while, but you know the opposition is so tough; it's not like I am going to win tournaments like this easily.

'This time I had the right feeling from the start. I didn't suffer from jet lag, which was quite helpful, and I had plenty of energy for the games. I would not collapse after a while. But I didn't do anything different from last year to fight the jet lag, not really. Maybe on the first day here I managed not to fall asleep at 6 pm, but I still fell asleep at 9, which is not ideal in general. Somehow I managed. Every day I would fall asleep before midnight, and would wake up at 7 or 8, but in a way this was not so bad, since we started play at one in the afternoon instead of the usual three. That helped.'

Obviously a crucial game was the one in Round 4 against Magnus Carlsen. I'm surprised how people summed up this game:

Magnus plays his typical game, gets a great position, then he makes a blunder and then another blunder and he loses. I thought it was a great fighting game from both sides.

'Yes, I agree with you. I thought it was very high-level chess in the middle-game, considering the unusual position we got right out of the opening. This was such a complicated fight and the position got so weird so fast. We didn't have any historical examples to rely on, like a typical idea that should be considered or whatever. It was just pure calculation, and pure instincts. It was like he was completely underdeveloped and that I should break through on the kingside. But it turns out he had enough counterplay on the queenside, strangely enough with his pawn on a6 and the blockade on the light squares. All sorts of tensions were unresolved, especially in the centre, while at the kingside and the queenside things were in some sort of a stalemate. The central action would determine what would happen on both flanks. There was my offer of an exchange sacrifice that was correctly declined, and

LENNART OOTES



Maxime Vachier-Lagrave with the original, large-size Sinquefeld Cup that stays in St. Louis.
 'I hope this victory is one of many to come, but there's never any guarantees.'

there was all this manoeuvring from Magnus to dislodge my bishop from g4, which he finally managed after I misplayed it in time-trouble. The nuances of the position were quite dramatic. Any shift in the position of the pieces could have dire consequences. Magnus has a special talent for creating this sort of mess, but I also have to claim partial responsibility (laughs). I wanted a fight. He was creating a mess, but I was creating one just as much.'

Do you get the chance to enjoy such a fight, or are you mainly under pressure and fighting?

'Well, I felt like I had a good position, so I was sort of enjoying it. It's always a challenge to play against Magnus, and I like challenges. I like showing my skill in fighting my opponents. Magnus was not the only challenge in this tournament, but this game was the toughest one for me. Probably not the one in which I had the worst position; that would have been the one against Fabiano. But it was a mess for a long time and when

things got resolved, of course, I could be scared, because after I misplayed it, my position shortly before the time-control was probably technically lost. That was why I took the risk of opening things up. I knew that if Magnus played accurately, I would just be lost, but then he saw this flashy win and missed one detail in the process and didn't go back till he noticed this detail, and then it was too late.

'Of course, to win against Magnus with black is always a benchmark, something I can build on for future games. Let's say, if by any chance I qualify for the World Championship match.'

It is clear that Magnus Carlsen remains the touchstone. At the same time, he has not yet won a major classical tournament this year. It feels that even though he is still in first place, something is happening. The balance of power seems to be shifting.

'I think that for slightly more than a year things have been levelling. Magnus has played just a bit worse

than he used to and at the same time everybody is better prepared, for him and for others. The level of the fights with him has increased. That said, in this tournament Magnus probably played the best chess of all of us. He also played much better than in his last appearances. (With a grin) He is on his way to redemption, so to speak.'

Then there was a game of a completely different nature that you played against Sergey Karjakin. A deeply analysed line against the Berlin that, as it turned out, both you and your opponent had prepared virtually till the end. How should we explain such a game to a layman? Is it very deep preparation or is it also a psychological struggle? What kind of game is this?

'There are a lot of elements in this kind of game. Of course, you prefer to produce original content over the board and in most games this is the case. I was playing the Giuoco Piano for a while in this tournament, but the positions are extremely messy and everything depends on move orders.

It takes a toll on you. And, of course, if your opponent is expecting this all the time, it doesn't work that well. As for the Berlin, I've had different approaches. Sometimes I go straight to the endgame, sometimes I get messy positions. This time I decided, not only to go to the endgame, but to go into one of the most forcing lines. So, first of all, your opponent may not remember anything. I think Sergey checked this line, he remembered some things, but he definitely didn't remember the whole image. That was already a tough enough challenge for him, to find the critical saving move, 29...♔e8. And it basically took him all of his time. Maybe it's not great for spectators, but at the same time, the ideas shown in that game are quite interesting, even though most of the top players were aware of this line. But the game in itself would be pure brilliancy if it were not all known already.'

While you were playing the game, Fabiano Caruana said in the studio that probably all participants had this position in their laptops...

'Yes, I was perhaps a bit more optimistic. I thought that maybe one or two players wouldn't. Anyway, there is another, maybe even more important point. Black players playing the Berlin, are generally not used to going for the endgame anymore, so by going there I actually force them to work on this endgame, check it before the game. And that's an amount of work that some of them are not prepared to do. That's also why some players, like Levon (Aronian) or Magnus, have switched back to the Marshall, for instance. It can actually make people deviate and stop playing the Berlin, because it's just tough and can be annoying.'

During the game, Garry Kasparov walked into the Club and I told him what Caruana had said. He smiled but also looked a bit apprehensive. He used to be the best prepared player in

the world. Do you think that, with these kinds of variations, preparation has been taken to a new level again?

'Preparation has certainly been taken to a new level. At some point, Kasparov was far ahead of the other players, but now everybody has access to quick machines and great engines. Actually, our preparation is seeking to deviate from the engines' main lines and evaluating these positions. We are looking for what sort of position we want

'The game in itself would be pure brilliancy if it were not all known already.'

against which player, because lines are equal in general.

'And the players are much tougher than they used to be. Sergey is one of the toughest players to beat; his defensive abilities are great. It is also one of my best traits; that I basically never give up. I fight even if I think my position is terrible. I hold on, I try to find whatever hope I can find to hang on. That makes it hard for everyone to beat you. You already didn't get much out of the opening and then you have to beat these players with this tiny edge, while they are much more resistant. But at the same time, we find that, in some positions, some players who are normally resilient, are not, or not so much. That can change the balance of the game.'

You are very fond of tactical play. This going for small nuances in the endgame, is that the mathematician in you?

'I don't know. I just know that, like every tactician likes to say, my best part of the game is probably the endgame,

in which I can calculate everything. That's where we find nuances. I wouldn't consider myself a tactician. I consider myself a calculator, and a pretty damn good one.'

So if you have a sharp Sicilian, you see yourself more as a calculator than as someone like Tal, who wanted to create chaos...

'It is actually very rare that I go for pure chaos. I do that mostly when I don't feel comfortable with my position. Unless I have very specific reasons to go for broke, I will not do so. I will just sit tight and try to improve my position. This may mean going for an attack, but I won't go for a line in which a tempo can be decisive and in which you really can't figure out the consequences. The good thing of going for broke if you are lost is that it changes the dynamics of the game and you may turn things around, especially in rapid or blitz.'

So, whose idea was it to grow a beard?

'It wasn't my idea. (Hesitates) But I am fine with it. My manager, Laurent Verat, suggested it. In the past I was sometimes too lazy to shave and would have a three- or four-day stubble. So when it was suggested, I thought, why not, let's try something new. I was a bit worried that it would be uncomfortable. So far it hasn't been, but I don't know how long it will last (smiles). At some point I may get bored with it. You never know with these things.

You might think now that it certainly didn't bring you bad luck.

'Beards are very fashionable these days; apparently they're all the rage.'

Are you sensitive about the way you present yourself, the way you dress?

'I used really not to care when I was a teenager. Now I have at least some minimum... But still, you know, I am not someone who thinks that people should be judged by their looks, by what they wear. It feels to me that this

is one of the fundamental things that are wrong in modern society. But if dressing well is seen as showing some respect for others, I will happily do it. I don't mind wearing a jacket, but in my ideal society, if someone wants to be in shorts because he is more comfortable in shorts, so be it.'

And you wouldn't mind if someone came to a chess game in shorts?

'No, I wouldn't mind. In a freer society I think it would be fine. I am not judging people who dress well. And occasionally I am like that, it's also a nice feeling to be well dressed, but I think that if you like to dress sloppily, you should be allowed to.'

Thanks to this win you moved into second place in the world rankings, and you are chasing Magnus in the GCT. Does that add pressure or is it a situation you feel comfortable with?

'I already was there last year. I was not doing so well in the Grand Chess Tour but I was number two (in the world rankings), with even a higher rating than I have now. But the level of competition is so tough. When I was number two, I didn't consider myself a better player than when I was number eight. If you can move from number eight to number two in one tournament, it means that the race is very close. Every mishap comes at a big price and every achievement brings big gains.'

But your main goal is the Candidates. 'Yes, there's no doubt about that. But before thinking of winning the Candidates, I must qualify for it. I have a couple of chances. The first one is the World Cup in Tbilisi, which is going to be a tough challenge. I have no chance to qualify by rating, but then there is the FIDE Grand Prix, where I will have a pretty good chance. I have to win or come second in Mallorca. There is no doubt I can achieve that; it's only a question of my form at that moment.'

'As number two, I didn't consider myself a better player than when I was number eight.'

You seem to be confident you can keep this good form, but isn't form unpredictable?

'It is quite random. I wasn't in such

great shape for a year, starting from the last Sinquefeld Cup, and I had a few achievements. I was stable top-5, top-10, but I wasn't making the difference. Getting 50 per cent and sometimes less against these guys is nothing to write home about, but it's a good thing to know that I am established and that I fight these guys on equal terms. But I also want to fight them for the first place. It feels great to be doing that, and hopefully I can keep this going for a little while now.' ■

Deep preparation

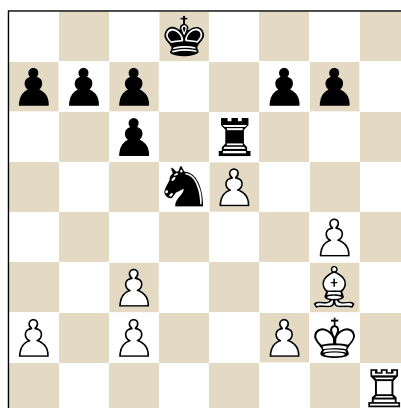
In Round 7, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Sergey Karjakin played a most remarkable game that was not only already largely known to them, but probably also to many of their colleagues.

**Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Sergey Karjakin**

St Louis 2017 (7)

Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence

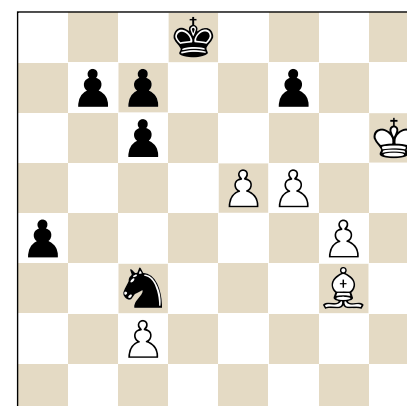
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6
4.O-O ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♙xc6
dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♙xd8+ ♔xd8
9.h3 ♙e8 10.♘c3 h5 11.♙f4
♙e7 12.♙ad1 ♙e6 13.♘g5 ♙h6
14.♙fe1 ♙b4 15.g4 hxg4 16.hxg4
♘e7 17.♘xe6 ♙xe6 18.♙g2 ♙xc3
19.bxc3 ♙d8 20.♙xd8+ ♙xd8
21.♙h1 ♘d5 22.♙g3



22...♙h6 A new move. In the 2014 Candidates tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk, Karjakin played 22...g5 against Anand (1/2-1/2, 33). The position

remains a draw, but Black has to walk a very narrow (and quite spectacular) path to reach it.

23.♙xh6 gxh6 24.♙h3 ♘xc3
25.♙h4 ♘xa2 26.♙h5 ♘c3
27.♙xh6 a5 28.f4 a4 29.f5



29...♙e8!

The only choice, and a key move the black player has to know. After 29...a3 30.e6 f6 31.♙g7 ♘d5 32.c4 a2 33.cxd5 a1 ♙ 34.♙f7 Black is powerless against the white pawns.
30.g5 a3 31.e6 a2 32.♙g7 fxg6 33.f6 a1 ♙ 34.f7+ ♙d7 35.♙e5 ♙a5 36.♙f6 ♙c5 37.f8 ♙ ♙xf8+ 38.♙xf8 ♘e4

After the game Karjakin revealed that his knowledge reached all the way to this position and that he had spent most of his time retrieving his preparation from his memory.

39.♙f7 ♘xg5+ 40.♙xg5 ♙d6 41.♙f6 e5 42.♙f5 ♙d5 43.♙d8 ♙d4 44.♙xc7 ♙c3 45.♙xe5 ♙xc2 Draw.



In his eagerly awaited return to the board, Garry Kasparov still showed deep understanding – and pulled familiar faces – but too often the former World Champion went for thinks that were too long for the format.

Hurt by his last-round loss against Magnus Carlsen in the Sinquefield Cup, Levon Aronian hit back brilliantly in the Rapid & Blitz at the St. Louis Chess Club. But while the Armenian was having his revenge, all eyes were on the return of Garry Kasparov. Would he...? Could he...? Certainly, there were flashes of genius, and the moves and the faces were still there, but the unevenness of his play showed that even living legends are susceptible to the passing of time. **ALEJANDRO RAMIREZ** reports on what well may have been the great champion's final goodbye.

Aronian on a roll in St. Louis Rapid & Blitz

Kasparov's last hurrah?

To say that the fourth leg of the Grand Chess Tour, the Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz, was the most anticipated event of the year, is probably no exaggeration. Since the announcement of the return, albeit brief, of chess legend Garry Kasparov to tournament play, the chess world had been buzzing about the event and about the former World Champion's chances. It would also be amiss to write about this event without mentioning the Sinquefeld Cup, which finished only a few days before the start of the STL Rapid & Blitz. Six players stayed in Saint Louis after the Sinquefeld Cup: Sergey Karjakin, Levon Aronian, Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura, Ian Nepomniachtchi and Vishy Anand, and they were joined by the four wild-cards: Leinier Dominguez, David Navara, Le Quang Liem and Garry Kasparov. With the winner of the previous event, MVL, leaving the stage (since, like Magnus Carlsen – winner of both the Paris and Leuven

legs – he had already participated in two of the three rapid/blitz events and could not play the third), a new winner would have to emerge, and plenty of people were hungry to prove something in this tournament. Beating the great Garry Kasparov

have for such a high level of competition.

The Sinquefeld Cup had attracted quite a large spectator crowd, both online and at the Club. I was a bit disappointed to learn that none of the playing days for the Rapid & Blitz

would fall in a weekend, and was honestly worried it might impact viewership. That feeling quickly dissipated when I entered the Club a solid hour before the first move was going to be made. I was setting up my workstation with WIM Ivette Garcia, since we were in charge of doing the Spanish broadcast for both this tournament and the Sinquefeld, and it was difficult to manoeuvre through the Club's first floor; it was so crowded. People had come from all over to see the great legend play.



A last word of encouragement from chess fan John Urschel, who made the first move. Nowadays, the former NFL star is completing his Ph.D in mathematics at MIT.

along the way would be a nice bonus. Garry himself said during the opening ceremony that it would be a hard fight, and that he hadn't been able to prepare as much as he should

Game One on day one, already brought a huge amount of excitement. The duel that everyone was focused on, Sergey Karjakin, the new Russian contender to the World Championship, against the legend

from the old guard, Garry Kasparov. Garry brought some interesting preparation in the Nimzo-Indian, which he adhered to throughout most of the event, and obtained a slight opening edge, which Sergey neutralized with good play. On other boards, Nakamura beat Anand as Black in a strong game, while Caruana, up a queen against a rook and totally winning, got himself mated against Liem. Just to steal the show, Levon

games he was simply unable to keep up the pressure. Garry often went for long thinks that were too long for the time-format, coming up with less-than-accurate plans or ideas. Perhaps he was rusty, because I have no doubt that the Kasparov of old would have squashed opponents from many of the positions he got. Against Hikaru, he even found himself in deep trouble after a brilliant kingside rupture from the American, and was

defenders, and crushing attacks still have to be meticulously tailored to reel in the full point.

In Round 5, Garry again found himself in a fantastic situation, and again the game turned around.

Garry Kasparov

Ian Nepomniachtchi

St. Louis rapid 2017 (5)

Grünfeld, Three Knights Variation

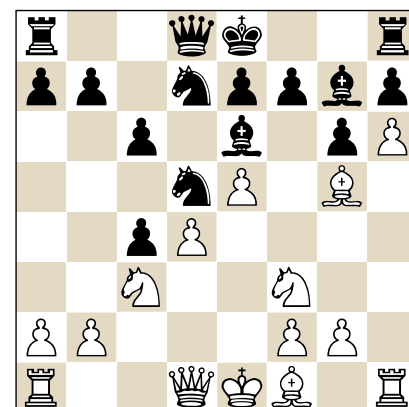
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.h4

It was almost impossible to guess what Kasparov would play with either white or black, but somehow there was a theme of throwing the h-pawn forward, regardless which colour or opening he went for!

5...c6 6.♙g5 dxc4

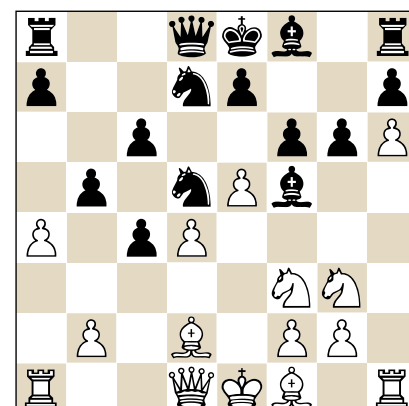
A sharper line than 6...♗e4 or 6...h6.

7.e4 ♙e6 8.e5 ♘d5 9.h5 ♘d7 10.h6!



White's huge space advantage gives him compensation for the pawn. White not only gains the initiative, but also retains permanent pluses, as we will soon see.

10...♙f8 11.♗e4 f6 12.♙d2 b5 13.a4 ♙f5 14.♗g3



‘People came from all over to see the great legend play.’

Aronian played a brilliancy against David Navara that you will find annotated by the winner at the end of this article.

The action did not stop there. The players were given a 10-15 minute break between rounds. In most of the rapid portion of the tournament, fortunes waxed and waned. Winning streaks were rare, because losers came back fighting and winners fell in spectacular ways. Aronian's successful opening experiment against Nepomniachtchi in the Sinquefeld Cup was annulled when the Russian scored a terrific success. Lucky Le from the previous round was soundly defeated by Karjakin, while previously luckless Caruana crushed Navara. Kasparov? Well, he remained mysteriously solid. His power and grace were obvious as he played. His face was full of expression when he touched the pieces. His openings were both powerful and surprising. As Nakamura had mentioned before the tournament, it was impossible to prepare against Garry... no one knew what his repertoire was after 12 years of absence! Hikaru himself found himself in trouble with the white pieces, while Garry masterfully nursed his two bishop advantage. But in many

lucky that Hikaru failed to find the way to win.

The tally at the end of the first day had the leaders leading on a flimsy 4/6 (actually 2/3, but again points in the rapid counted double), not much of a lead over a large pack on 50 per cent, which included Garry. The fans were hopeful, and looking forward to the great champion to convert his superior positions.

Kasparov found himself in the same situation at the start of the next day, facing one of the leaders, Aronian, who played a quirky opening. Garry punished him immediately, and the pressure was on. He won a pawn, and simplified to a knight ending. Things were going well, until, bam, an inaccuracy and Aronian simplified to a draw. Garry's face was a mix of disbelief and bewilderment, but that didn't change the fact that he had let another fish off the hook.

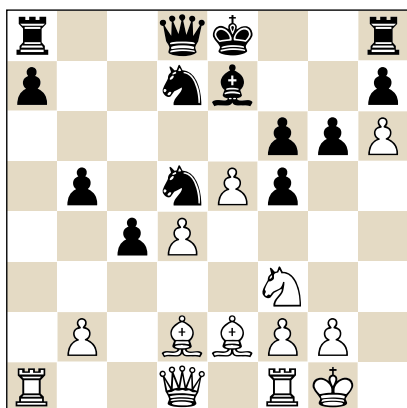
I believe that many fans of the game underestimated just how good these players are. Yes, Garry had dominated for 15 years, but chess has evolved since then, new stars have learned the tricks and strategies of the great players of the past. Tactics that would have worked in the Tal area will be struck down by today's tough

14...e6

This is almost a sad necessity. Black's pawn structure is compromised, but without this move, how would the bishop on f8 ever get out?

15. ♖xf5 exf5 16. axb5 cxb5 17. ♙e2 ♙e7 18. 0-0

18. ♖a5, as in the following comment, won't work because of 18...c3 19. ♖xb5 cxd2+.

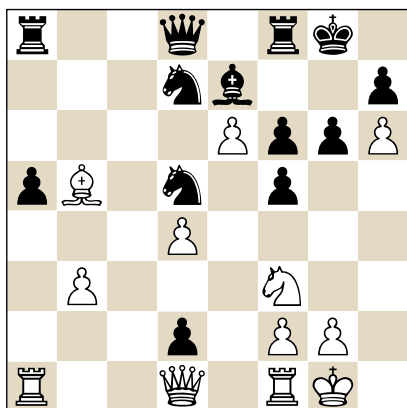


18...a5?

A miss-timed move. 18...0-0 19. ♖a5 is massively unpleasant, for example 19...a6 20. ♙xc4 bxc4 21. ♖xd5.

18...a6 is still pretty unclear, though.

19. b3! c3 20. ♙xb5 cxd2 21. e6 0-0



22.exd7?!

This gives Ian a way back into the game. It took a few seconds before he availed of it.

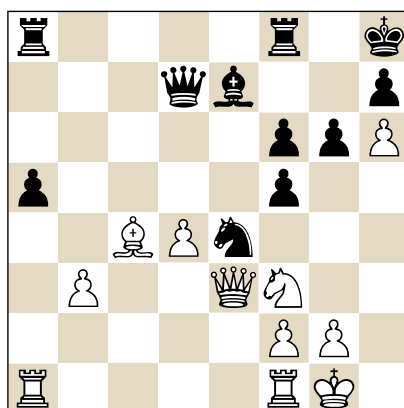
Alternatively, 22. ♙xd7 ♖b6 23. ♙b5 ♙b4 24. ♖xd2 does not win or anything, but White's position is certainly better. Black's king will be a permanent weakness and the structure on the kingside isn't mobile for Black.

22... ♖c3! 23. ♙c4+ ♙h8 24. ♖xd2 ♖e4 25. ♖e3 ♖xd7

NEW IN CHESS

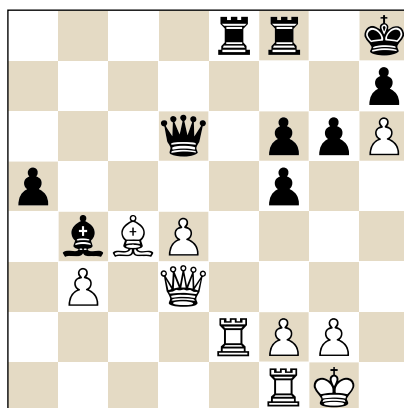


Ian Nepomniachtchi had the pleasure of defeating Garry Kasparov with a tactical coup reminiscent of Alexander Alekhine.



Now Black is completely fine. Black's coordination is much better here, and the knight on e4 is pretty powerful.

26. ♖d2 ♖xd2 27. ♖xd2 ♙b4 28. ♖d3 ♖d6 29. ♖a2 ♖ae8 30. ♖e2?!



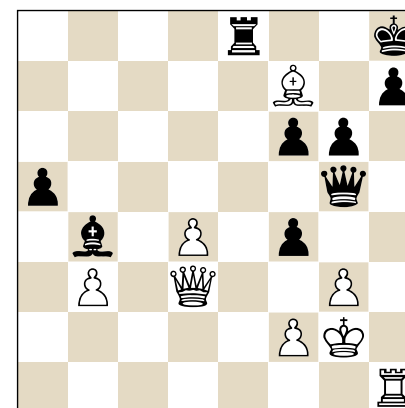
30... ♖f4

Forced onto the back foot, Kasparov

loses the thread of the game. The weakness on h6 is difficult to defend, and the bishop pair will favour the side with the initiative.

31. g3 ♖xh6 32. ♖g2 f4 33. ♖h1 ♖g5 34. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 35. ♙f7?

Missing the killer:



35... ♖e3!!

Not the most difficult calculation, but that doesn't detract from how beautiful this move is. The spirit of Alekhine in his game vs. Réti (Baden-Baden 1925) shines through.

36.fxe3

Any other move allows 36...f3+.

36... ♖xg3+ 37. ♖f1 f3

White resigned. He cannot avoid mate on e1 and mate on g2 without huge sacrifices.

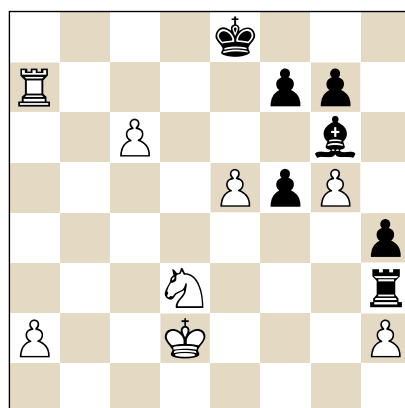
Dominguez vs. Caruana saw something that happens incredibly rarely: the Cuban player lost a position a pawn up in a rook ending that was virtually unlosable. Critics of the faster time- controls point to games like these as making chess less pure, while a counter-argument could be that it is OK to sacrifice some 'purity' in order to enhance the show. Aronian played an opening against Le that I'm sure he would not try in standard time-controls, and he was duly punished for it; but hey, risks were taken, and who doesn't like that?

The day ended with a win of Nakamura over Navara, Aronian's preparation saw off Caruana, and Kasparov split the point with his greatest rival in the mid-90s, Anand.

The following morning saw perhaps the most shocking game of the tournament. Garry Kasparov sat down at the board a couple of minutes before the start of Round 7 of the Rapid. He had this look on his face, the same killer look that had caused many a legend to hallucinate and fall prey to his psychological pressure. He was playing one of the nicest players in the competition, David Navara, who jumped when Garry extended his hand. He was simply overjoyed playing against a hero. The former dominant force of chess came out guns blazing: 1.e4! He had a preparation against David's Caro-Kann, and the Czech fell right into it. Garry's pawns stormed the kingside; he

pushed his f-pawn, a sacrificial lamb to shut down the bishop on g6, while a powerful knight established itself on f4. The transition to the endgame was flawless: there it was, Garry's first win of the tournament within reach. Then disaster struck. Garry kept missing win after win, until the following time-scramble:

Garry Kasparov
David Navara
St. Louis rapid 2017 (7)



36...Rhx2+ 37.Ke3?

Incomprehensible.

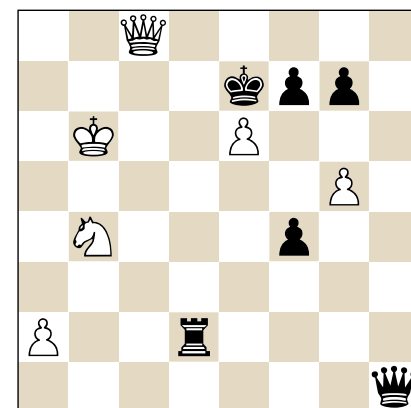
37.Ke3 keeps the enemy rook at bay and it is an easy win: 37...f4 38.e6 (38.Ra8+ Ke7 39.c7 is also good enough), and the c-pawn is unstoppable.

37...Rc2 38.e6 h3

Navara's h-pawn is rolling down the board, and the counterplay is real.

39.Ob4 f4+!? 40.Kd4! h2! 41.Ra8+ Ke7 42.Rh8 Rd2+ 43.Ob5 Be4! 44.c7 Bb7 45.Ob6 Bc8 46.Rxc8 h1K 47.Re8+ Ke8 48.c8K+ Ke7

Garry thought he still had this one in the bag.



49.Kc6??

It's a draw after 49.Kc7+ Kxe6 50.Kc8+ Rd7 51.Ke8+.

49...Kxc6+

A shock! No matter how White recaptures, he loses the queen, and the f-pawn runs.

50.Kxc6 Rd6 Black resigned.

As u/revolver0 commented on reddit: 'You can hear the hearts of all 30+-year-old chess players being broken.' Mine isn't quite 30, but it was no exception.

Garry did manage to win his next game, albeit in quite bizarre fashion. Unlike in his other games, he came under some pressure against Le, who spurned a repetition, only to blunder a rook in one move. A surprised Garry pointed to the rook before taking it, and the Vietnamese player simply smiled, shook his head and resigned. Not the victory people were hoping for, but there it was.

Caruana was the Garry's last opponent of the day, and the

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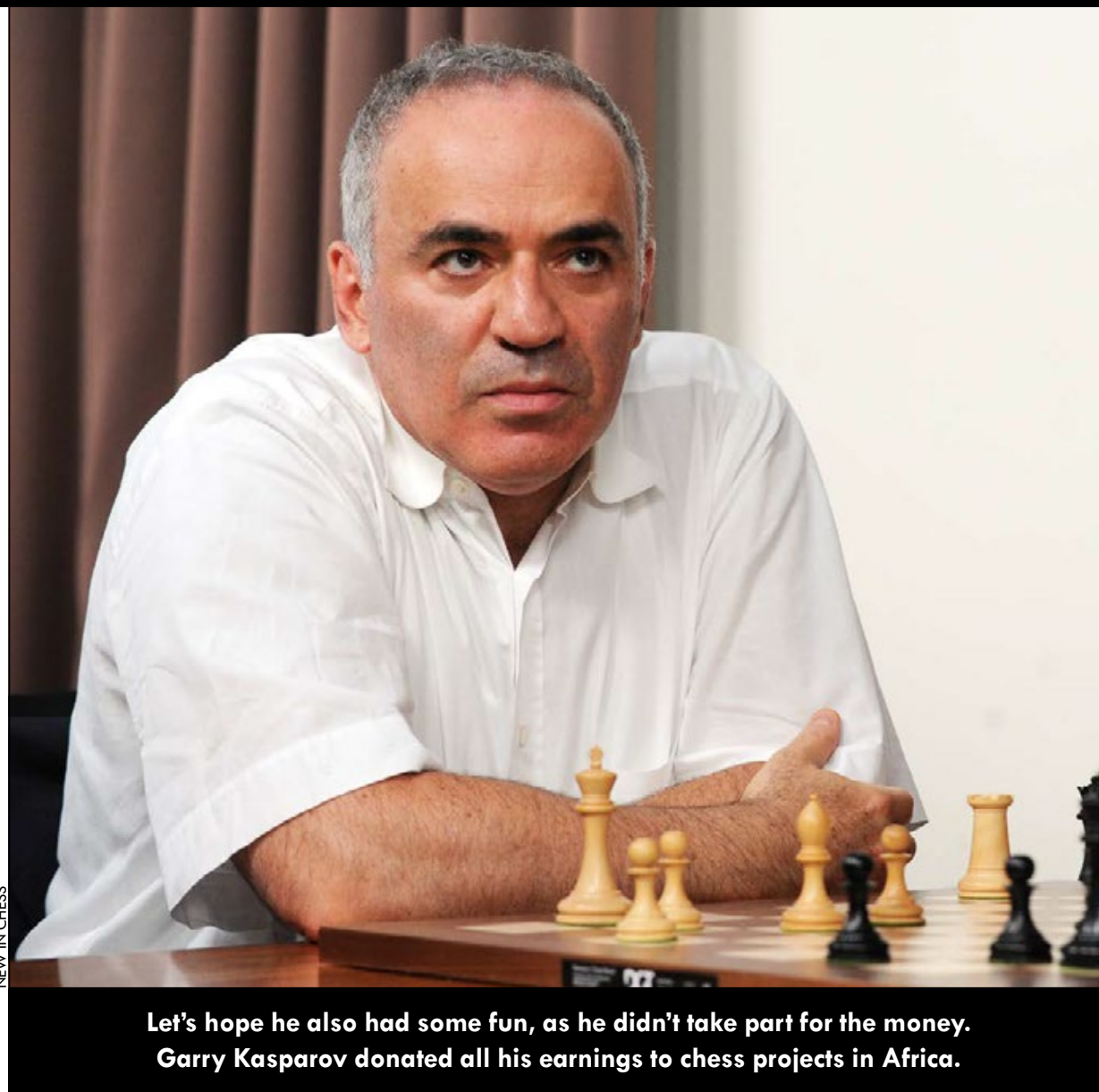
American won quite convincingly from an equal position. Aronian had quietly won the day with 2½/3, clinching the Rapid portion of the tournament with 6/9, which gave him a nice head start going to the Blitz a full point lead over the two Americans.

Blitz

Day 1 of the Blitz was perhaps not what people had expected. With Nakamura-Aronian as the entry, it was difficult to choose between focusing on Kasparov, in last place, against Karjakin, nearly last, or focus on the leaders fighting for first place. Garry made our decision easy by punching out a King's Gambit! It didn't pay off, since Sergey was the one pushing for a win and only drew because of raging time-pressure.

The day was spectacular and fierce, the players having between five and 15 minutes to rest, and saw few changes of the guard, because the Armenian remained on top. As for fighting spirit, Levon Aronian exemplified it as he pushed for 147 moves against Navara, a game that only finished when Chris Bird, the chief TD, enforced the 75-move rule (basically, the known 50-move rule, but it can be claimed by an arbiter). As commentators, we thought we were done with the round, only to notice Nakamura was still pushing against Le Quang Liem!

Aronian kept up his solid approach, and his only loss of the day was against Caruana. The Armenian blundered a rook in an otherwise equal position. Speaking of Fabiano, he tumbled down the standings with disastrous days at the Blitz. While reminiscing of Day 1 would be remiss if I didn't mention the brilliant performance of the reigning World Blitz Champion, Sergey Karjakin. Despite a mediocre rapid event, Sergey surged up the standings with seven straight wins in the blitz portion, and ended the first day with 8/9, back in contention. Nakamura couldn't keep pace with



Let's hope he also had some fun, as he didn't take part for the money. Garry Kasparov donated all his earnings to chess projects in Africa.

Aronian, who ended the day with a two-point lead.

Going into the last day, three names clearly popped up as the possible winners: the clear favourite was Aronian, who was trailed by a fair margin by Nakamura and Karjakin. The Armenian saw little reason to take big risks, even drawing his first game quickly with the white pieces against Nakamura. Despite a loss in Round 2 of the day against Navara, his lead was never in doubt. The tournament was over before the eighth round of the day even began. Neither Karjakin nor Nakamura kept pace, allowing Levon Aronian to emerge as the clear winner, 2½ points ahead of the pack after Round 7, or rather Round 16 out of 18 rounds of Blitz.

Kasparov's last stand?

This made it easy on the commentators to decide on which games to follow. With the clear winner already crowned, it was now possible to focus completely on Garry's potentially last rated games of his entire career. His

penultimate game, against Leinier Dominguez, saw one of the few Najdorfs that the players allowed him to play. Many avoided it with 3.♙b5+, others played random stuff from the beginning, but not Leinier. Garry's handling of the game was like a dance. He played an early ...g5, cementing his control of the dark squares. He pushed back all his opponent's threats, leaving him paralyzed. The transition to the endgame was smooth, and the conversion even better. It was said recently that in Paris/Leuven Magnus was playing chess, while everyone else was playing blitz. At least in this one game, Garry played chess, not blitz, and at his best. See for yourself.

Leinier Dominguez

Garry Kasparov

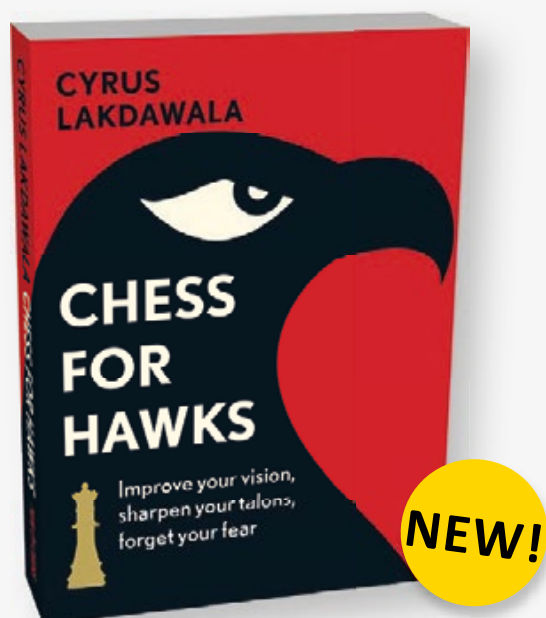
St. Louis blitz 2017 (17)

Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3 e6
7.g4 h6 8.♙g2 g5

WINNER

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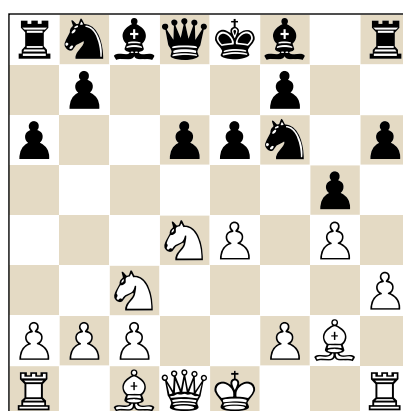
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- Do you know when to trade in initiative for material?

Chess for Hawks teaches an important but neglected skill: how to obey the position's requirements instead of your natural inclination.

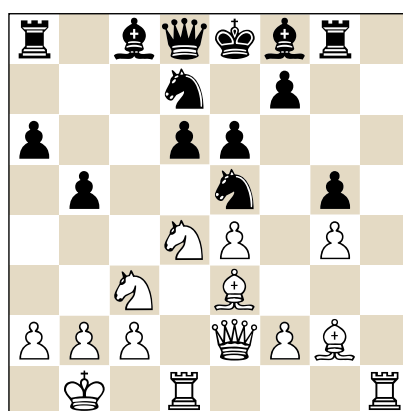
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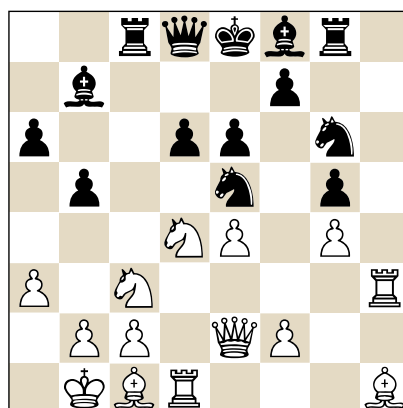
Not a new idea, but Dominguez said it caught him off-guard.

9.♘e3 ♘bd7 10.♙e2 ♘e5
11.0-0-0 ♘fd7 12.h4 ♖g8
13.hxg5 hxg5 14.♔b1 b5



So far we are following an old game between Kasimdzhanov and Sasikiran (France 2008), which ended in a draw. Judging by the speed the grandmasters were playing, it didn't seem as if both of them were familiar with it.

15.a3 ♘b7 16.♘c1 ♖c8 17.♗h3 ♘g6 18.♘h1 ♘de5



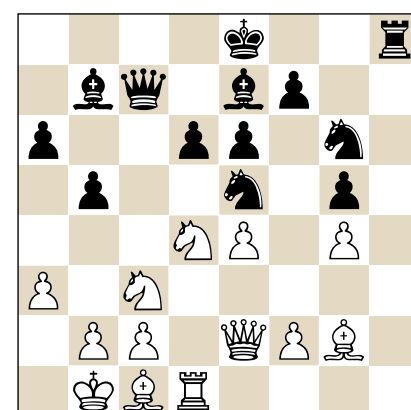
Your weak engine might claim that White is doing OK, and that the position is about equal. However, a deeper inspection reveals that structurally White will suffer, and that his

activity doesn't seem to be close to creating real threats. Black's knights are dominating the board.

19.♖g3?! ♘e7 20.♘a2 ♗h8!

Kasparov wastes no time in taking control of a crucial file.

21.♖c3 ♖xc3 22.♘xc3 ♙c7
23.♘g2



23...♙c4!

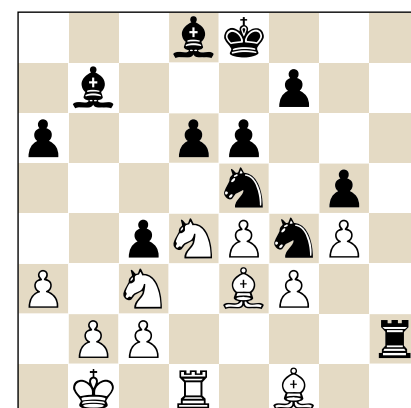
I think many players would shy away from this move, not realizing how dangerous the endgame is for White. 23...♘f4 24.♙f1 (24.♘xf4 gxf4 is positionally disastrous) 24...♘g4 25.♙g1 ♘e5 26.♘f1 wins a pawn, but White at least gets rid of his g4-weakness.

24.♙xc4 bxc4

One of the few moments in which Garry really sat down and thought. Both captures were tempting.

25.f3 ♗h2 26.♘f1 ♘f4 27.♘e3 ♘d8!

Improving his last piece.



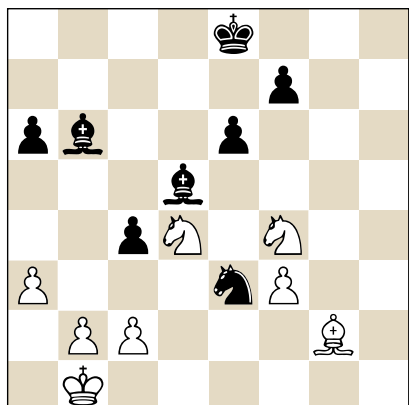
28.♖d2?!

White's position is very unpleasant, but now Black gets everything he wants. It doesn't seem like a bad idea to exchange Black's active rook, but in this position there are tactical issues.

28...♖xd2 29.♘xd2 ♘b6

White cannot afford to lose f3, since this would cause the structure to collapse.

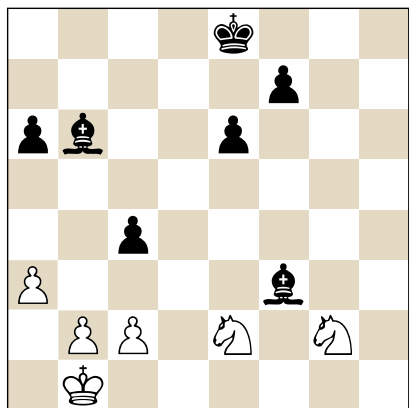
30. ♖xf4 gxf4 31. ♘ce2 d5 32. exd5 ♙xd5 33. ♙g2 ♘xg4 34. ♘xf4 ♗e3



35. ♗de2 35.c3 was White's last hope, but Black's advantage is humongous.

35... ♗xg2 36. ♗xg2 ♙xf3

The rest needs no explanation.



37. ♗ef4 ♙e7 38. ♙c1 e5 39. ♗h4 ♙e3+ 40. ♙b1 ♙xf4 41. ♗xf3 ♙e6 42. b3 e4 43. ♗d4+ ♙d5 44. c3 ♙e5 45. bxc4+ ♙xc4 46. ♗f5 ♙xc3 47. ♙c1 ♙d3 48. ♙d1 e3
White resigned.

Kasparov's performance overall was disappointing for many, but a final day that included victories over Caruana, Nakamura and Dominguez, with a solid 5½/9, was a wonderful last hurrah in the tournament.

Garry's play, combined with the general anticipation for the tournament itself, caused viewership records to be absolutely shattered. The interest in the tournament grew day by day, and the numbers that we kept seeing on our broadcasts were tremendous.

Shostakovich's Fifth

As far as the winner goes, he was clearly the most deserving player in the tournament. He commanded the leader board from start to finish, and never let go. He attributed some of his success to luck, specifically pointing out his game against Le Quang Liem on the second day of the Blitz, because the Vietnamese flagged in a winning position. From an outsider's perspective, Levon did not receive any more 'luck' than any of the other players.

In the post-tournament interview in the Spanish broadcast he also mentioned that he felt that he had something to prove, and that this was part of the reason why he played so well. He was hungry after losing a heart-breaking game against Magnus Carlsen in the last round of the Sinquefield that pushed him all the way down to fourth place. Not only that, he was not known as a good rapid and blitz player. He likened his victory to Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. The reason? The great composer stated that this work was 'the reply to his critics'.

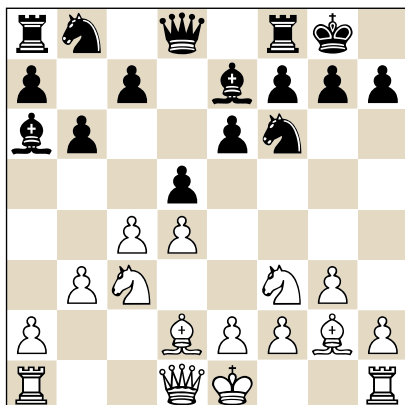


NOTES BY
Levon Aronian

Levon Aronian
David Navara

St. Louis rapid 2017 (1)
Queen's Indian Defence,
Nimzowitsch Variation

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗f3 b6 4.g3 ♙a6 5.b3 ♙b4+ 6. ♙d2 ♙e7 7. ♗c3 0-0 8. ♙g2 d5



This classical set-up is regaining its popularity, gradually supplanting 8...c6, which, after the discovery of the idea 9.e4 d5 10.exd5 with rapid development for White, has become considered a difficult variation for Black.

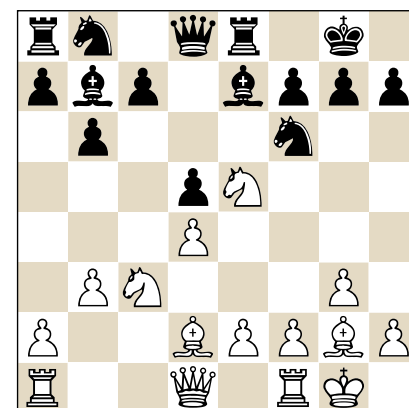
9.cxd5 exd5 10.0-0 ♗e8

In his successful Candidates Tournament in 2016, the Master of the Queen's Indian Defence, Sergey Karjakin, successfully upheld this position in as many as four games!

11. ♗e5

The most active and popular move.

11... ♙b7



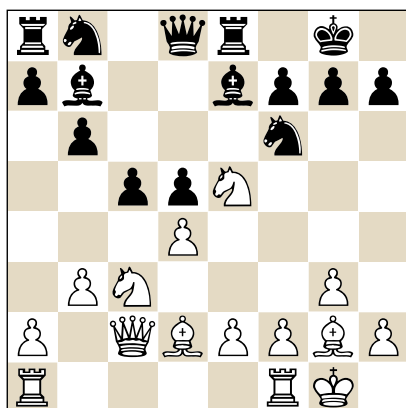
It appears that White has achieved something, but this impression is deceptive. Black's play is simple and understandable: a fight for the centre by a timely ...c5 and the development of the pieces. White has to work out how to maintain his knight on e5. It is worth mentioning that similar positions with the white pawn on b2 instead of b3 are often unpleasant for Black, since the white queen stands very strongly on b3.

12. ♙c2 I did not especially remember what was the strongest in this variation, and I chose that which I had seen in some games and lightly analysed. The most popular move in the position is 12. ♙c1, when Black usually plays 12... ♗bd7 and then sometimes ...♗f8, gradually preparing ...c7-c5. Another very logical move is 12. ♙c1, with the idea of transferring the bishop to b2, where it more actively influences the centre.

12...c5

I suspect that this is the best move

in the position. Black immediately carries out his general idea.



13.dxc5

After 13.e3 or 13.♙e3 Black brings out his knight to c6 and has a sound position.

13...bxc5

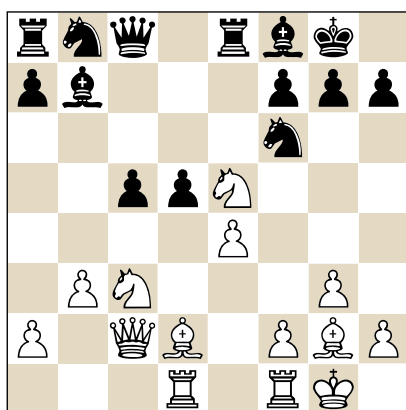
13...♙xc5, with active piece play, also does not look bad. In order to obtain good play against the isolated pawn White has to solve the problem of his bishop on d2, which for the moment is merely getting under his feet.

14.♖ad1

More strategic play arises after 14.♖fd1 ♙c8 15.♘a4.

14...♙c8 15.e4 ♙f8

David played quite quickly and, as he revealed after the game, he had been expecting 16.♙f4, with which he was familiar.



16.f4

In view of the fact that the rook stands on f1, this move looks logical, but it leads only to equality. Complicated tempo play results from 16.♙f4 d4 17.♘a4 h6 (with the threat of 18...g5, which is not so easy to parry).

16...d4

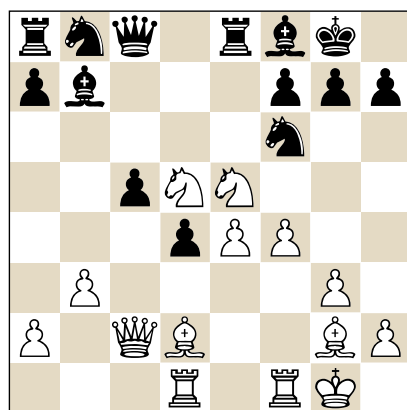
Not a bad decision, but possibly a

simpler way to equalize was 16...dxe4 17.♘xe4 ♙xe4 18.♙xe4 ♘xe4 19.♙xe4 ♘d7 with the exchange of the e5-knight and a solid position.

17.♘d5

‘Boris Gelfand told me that Boleslavsky considered the main beauty to be domination.’

After 17.♘b5 ♘bd7, although White has an interesting resource in the form of 18.♘xf7, which I had not foreseen, it does not lead to any great achievements, since after 18...♙xf7 19.♙c4+ ♙e7 20.e5 ♙xg2 21.exf6+ ♙xf6 22.♙xg2 ♘b6 Black is quite alright, thanks to the strong pawn on d4.



17...♘d5 18.exd5 f6

A mistake, which is prettily refuted. During the game I saw the strongest continuation for Black, but I assessed the position in my favour. In reality, after 18...♘d7 19.♙h3 ♖e7 20.♘c6 (20.d6 is bad because of 20...♖xe5 21.fxe5 ♙c6 with problems for White) 20...♖e8 21.♙a5 ♙xc6 22.dxc6 ♙xc6 23.♙g2 ♙a6 24.♙xa8 ♖xa8, Black has full compensation for the exchange. Possibly White

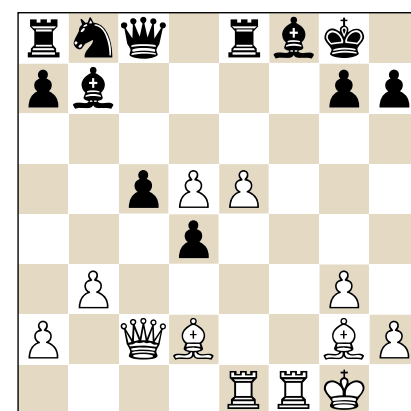
should refrain from 21.♙a5, but this does not change the assessment, which is one of dynamic balance.

19.♖de1 I spent a large part of my time reserve on this move, but, seeing that White's attack develops of its own accord, I was confident that this piece sacrifice was a practical decision.

19...fxe5

If 19...♘d7, then 20.♘c6 is unpleasant.

20.fxe5



20...♘d7

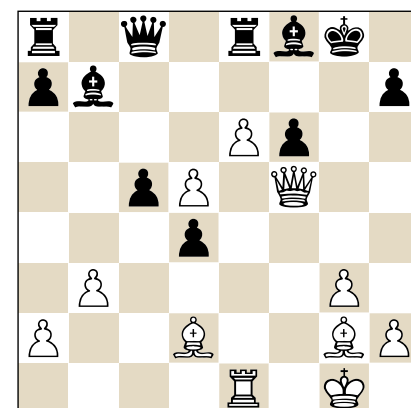
The most resilient defence was the active attempt 20...c4, but after the simple 21.bxc4 ♙c5 22.♙d3 White has a clear advantage. Black has problems with the defence of his king, similar to the game, after 20...♙a6 21.e6 ♙xf1 22.♖xf1. For example, 22...♘d7 23.♙e4 ♘f6 loses prettily to 24.♖xf6 gxf6 25.♙xh7+ ♙h8 26.♙g6 ♙d6 27.♙g8 with a winning attack.

21.e6

21.♙e4 also looked promising, but the move in the game is more direct.

21...♘f6 22.♖xf6 gxf6 23.♙f5

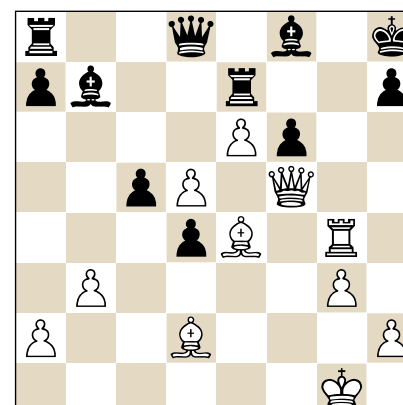
During my calculation of the move 19.♖de1, I considered this position to be close to winning, and I am pleased that on this rare occasion my optimistic prognosis proved to be correct.





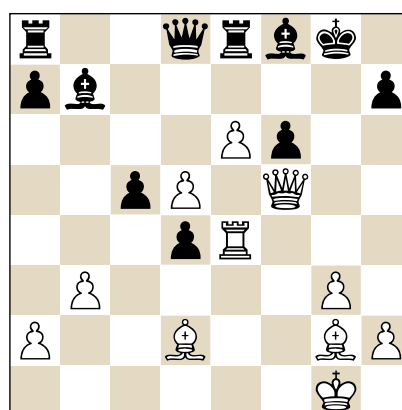
Commenting on his most brilliant win in the St. Louis Rapid & Blitz, Levon Aronian quotes lessons from his childhood heroes Larsen and Gligoric, and his good friend Boris Gelfand.

LENNART OOTES



23...♔d8 This loses simply. It is easy to see that 23...♖e7 does not greatly help on account of 24.d6, but the most resilient was 23...♖c7 with the idea after 24.♗e4 of playing 24...h5 and including the queen in the defence. After the strongest 25.♖xh5 ♖h7 26.♖g4+ ♗g7 27.♗f4 White remains with a close to decisive advantage, but things are not so simple as in the game.

24.♗e4



In my childhood very often I was

26...♖c8

26...♗xd5 would merely have deferred resignation. In this game David once again showed himself to be a gentleman, by allowing himself to be mated.

27.♗h4 ♖g8 28.♗xh7 ♗xd5 29.♖g6+ ♗g7 30.♖h5 ♗xe4 31.♗h8

Mate. ■

St. Louis rapid 2017		cat. XXI
		TPR
1 Aronian	6	2895
2 Nakamura	5½	2851
3 Caruana	5½	2849
4 Nepomniachtchi	5	2818
5 Dominguez	4½	2777
6 Le Quang Liem	4	2734
7 Karjakin	4	2730
8 Kasparov	3½	2688
9 Anand	3½	2692
10 Navara	3½	2697

St. Louis blitz 2017		cat. XXI
		TPR
1 Karjakin	13½	2966
2 Aronian	12½	2911
3 Nakamura	10½	2828
4 Nepomniachtchi	10	2818
5 Kasparov	9	2768
6 Le Quang Liem	8½	2756
7 Dominguez	7½	2720
8 Anand	7	2692
9 Navara	6	2652
10 Caruana	5½	2628

St. Louis combined 2017			
	rapid	blitz	total
1 Aronian	12	12½	24½
2 Karjakin	8	13½	21½
3 Nakamura	11	10½	21½
4 Nepomniachtchi	10	10	20
5 Caruana	11	5½	16½
6 Dominguez	9	7½	16½
7 Le Quang Liem	8	8½	16½
8 Kasparov	7	9	16
9 Anand	7	7	14
10 Navara	7	6	13

Short Stories



Summertime, and the living is easy – as the George Gershwin jazz classic says. Indeed, it has usually been my habit to reduce chess activity, paradoxically during what is the busiest part of the calendar, whiling away the sunny days with my family in the beautiful southwest Greek region of Messenia. This year I opted for a change, at least partly to take my mind off the anxiety of awaiting my son Nicholas' final-year school examination results.

I last played (and won) the Politiken Cup, in Denmark, back in 2006. The tournament was then held in the suburban wasteland of Taastrup, which I had cruelly, but accurately, described in my newspaper column as the most boring place on the planet. However, a few years ago the tournament, with its new sponsor Xtracon, moved to the historic city of Helsingør with its imposing, UNESCO-listed Kronborg Castle – the setting of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'. Thankfully, the genial organiser, Lars-Henrik Bech Hansen, is a friend of mine, and we were quickly able to agree financial terms. The one, unforeseen, drawback of this otherwise satisfying settlement was that I missed out on playing in a revamped British Championship (which would eventually be won by Gawain Jones). This is rarely of any concern, due to the generally modest level of sponsorship, but on this occasion the great impresario Malcolm Pein had devoted some of his seemingly boundless energy to rescuing the event from near-oblivion. By the time he contacted me, though, my participation in Xtracon was already assured. Alas, one cannot be everywhere at once.

Unfortunately, I succumbed to a nasty virus shortly before the tournament. I was so under-the-weather that I almost cancelled my participation altogether. However, I didn't wish to disappoint and, besides, someone has to pay the university fees.

I have grown accustomed to a degree of comfort over the years, and I must confess that I found the accommodation, at the sprawling Konventum, a touch Lacedaemonian. Rooms were poky and cleaned only sporadically. I could barely access the Internet, unless I took the trouble to forego privacy and carry my laptop (often dashing through the rain) over to the lobby. The reader may imagine from this unflattering description that your columnist is a self-indulgent sybarite. Perhaps, but I should point out that Konventum is not even close to being the most uncomfortable place I have stayed

throughout the decades. There are dozens of examples to choose from, but two, in particular, stick out. As a junior I was billeted in a classroom, coincidentally enough also in Denmark, in Viborg 1979. But that was luxury compared to a draughty dormitory, in an Irish monastery, with a predatory pederast (Brian Eley) as a team captain, as I once endured at the Glorney Cup. In summary though, living quarters in Helsingør were tolerable, but far from sumptuous.

On the positive side, we were surrounded by lush grass and woodland, which was ideal for walking. From the dining room, the vista across the Øresund, with its gently passing boats, to Sweden, was most soothing. But most of all I loved the medieval city itself, with its

narrow, colourful streets, churches and timbered buildings. The castle dominates the landscape, but there is also an architecturally-witty, scaphoid Maritime Museum, in a former dry dock, nearby.

With around 430 competitors, and no minimum rating requirement, the first couple of rounds were exercises in bunny-bashing. Oddly, there were as many as sixteen(!) different halls, which rather negated the democratic-levelling aspect of the open entry. An apartheid of sorts quickly set in: I simply didn't see the majority of players who never made it to the top room. Soon, though, the tournament proper began. Nikita Vitiugov (2724) was number one seed, but a blistering pace was set by the mercurial Baadur Jobava. A few weeks earlier I had witnessed him at the Grand Chess Tour in Leuven, playing so weakly that even my grandmother would have beaten him convincingly, but here he was back to the dazzling brilliance that bought him a gold medal on Board 1 at the 2016 Baku Olympiad. To observe Jobava's games against Kevin Goh Wei Ming and Alexander Shabalov, to name just two, was to witness a pyroclastic eruption of combinations.

Despite the lingering illness, I staggered to 6½/7, thanks to some good play and a large slice of luck against Tiger Hillarp Persson. Unfortunately, for the second time this year, when within touching distance of a 'live' 2700 rating, I capitulated in abject fashion to my Georgian nemesis. With two further draws, Jobava secured a deserved outright first place. After defeating Simen Agdestein in the last round, for the first time in 32 years, I joined an eight-way tie for second. The prizes

Second Summer

were not split, however, and we entered the lottery of median Buchholz. Absurdities were almost bound to occur and did. I was not a little peeved to see Krishnan Sasikiran walk off with a cheque three times the size of mine, despite having a worse rating performance. Overall Xtracon was a most pleasant event in which to participate, but this parting injustice – a consequence of thoughtlessness, rather than malice – struck an unnecessary discordant note.

After spending 10 days at home, I jetted off to the UAE for the Abu Dhabi Masters. The petroleum-rich

‘The reader may imagine from this unflattering description that your columnist is a self-indulgent sybarite.’

Gulf country evokes happy memories, as I won an individual gold and team silver way back in the 1986 Dubai Olympiad. There are three important Opens annually – in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah – but I had never played in any of them. This will change. The hotel – part of the Thai-based Dusit Thani chain – was opulent, as befits the wealthy Emirati capital. This was just as well considering that the scorching temperatures (typically 40+C) were not conducive to being outdoors.

It transpired that a middle-aged English Grandmaster was top seed, after several late withdrawals, including the previous winner, Dmitry Andreikin. Nevertheless, the tournament was a strong one with a dozen 2600+ GMs, and not much of a tail. Interestingly, not a single one of the 124 competitors reached 3/3, an almost unprecedented occurrence in an open of that size. In the first round I already faced a 2366-rated Indian teenager. Regrettably, one simply cannot expect such players to keel over and die, awed by your own magnificence. You still have to play sufficiently well. I didn’t and drew. In the second round I was held again – this time by an 11-year old, Raunak Sadhwani (2359). His mother should clip him round the ears for repeatedly, and illegally, offering me draws, but I have only myself to blame for the result.

The second seed, 29 year-old Dr. Bassem Amin (2680) from Egypt, who has been in tremendous form of late, was also pegged back in the first round, but then began a winning burst of 5 straight games. A draw with Georgia’s sunburned, lobster-coloured Levan Pantsulaia was followed by a crushing miniature against local hero

Salem Saleh, to give him a vital half point lead going into the final game.

I also managed to pick up the pace, although not without difficulty. The morning that I learned that Nicholas had succeeded in earning a place at University College London was an emotional roller-coaster. I felt so shattered that I was literally on the point of abandoning as a draw a king and pawn endgame against Italy’s Fabrizio Bellia, until I accidentally noticed it was completely winning. That evening, my UAE hosts then took me out to Yas Island for a wonderful surprise celebration of my son’s achievement.

Against Ivan Rozum, of Russia, I was totally outplayed, but then found a desperate middlegame horizontal king-dash from g1-b1. ‘Castling’ both sides seemed to confuse him, and I then launched a devastating, lightning attack on the wing I had abruptly vacated. A sharp private disagreement earlier this year, on the subject of divine revelation, perhaps adversely affected Ahmed Adly’s composure against me in Round 8. There was not the slightest personal animosity from my side, which allowed me to maintain inner equilibrium and await his implosion. That important victory brought me face-to-face with his countryman, Dr. Bassem Amin, with \$13,000 to play for.

At first the game went well and, objectively, I must have been winning. Then Amin cunningly sacrificed two knights for a rook to randomise the situation. It was

‘For the second time this year, when within touching distance of a ‘live’ 2700 rating, I capitulated in abject fashion to my Georgian nemesis.’

probably objectively still good for me, but I couldn’t manage to co-ordinate in a position that rapidly span out of control. I then blundered badly, but offered a draw in the nick of time. With just 6 seconds remaining, he accepted, although the engines show I was busted.

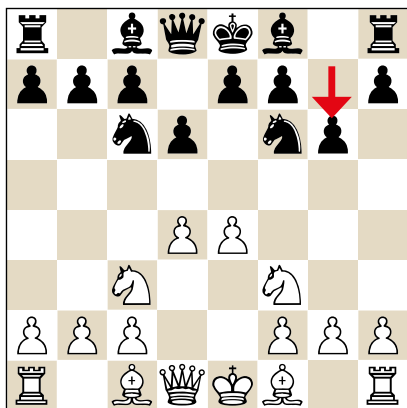
Amin is on the verge of becoming Africa and the Arab world’s first 2700 player. He is a fine talent and deserves to reach this landmark. As for your scribe, I was immensely relieved to escape unscathed and to finish a summer of second places. ■



A Pirc-Nimzowitsch hybrid



Jeroen Bosch



4...g6!?

‘What if you want to play 1...Nc6 but don’t want to enter the Open Games after 2.Nf3...?’

In his autobiographical games collection, *The Art of Bisguier* (Russell Enterprises 2008), American GM Arthur Bisguier (1929-2017) notes how he would often go 1...Nc6 versus 1.e4 but that hardly anyone would take him up on it. Most of the time, his opponents would ‘steer the game into a Ruy Lopez, Italian Game, or other common king pawn opening’. If you check your database, you will see that Bisguier’s opponents are no exception. Indeed, the most common reply after 1.e4 Nc6 is 2.Nf3, when Bisguier would just go 2...e5. The American obviously used 1...Nc6 as a move order weapon. His opponents rightly weren’t all that happy to test him with 2.d4, for both 2...d5 (3.exd5 ♖xd5 4.Nf3, and now both 4...e5 and 4...g4 are acceptable Scandinavians; 3.e5 ♙f5 is what Nimzowitsch liked) and 2...e5 (3.d5 ♘ce7; 3.dxe5 ♘xe5 4.Nf3 ♙f6, a Miles favourite) are completely playable.

But what if you want to play 1...Nc6 but don’t want to enter the Open Games after 2.Nf3...?

Not a bad choice, if you want to give 1... Nc6 a distinct flavour, is a transposition into a rare line from the Pirc in the footsteps of Nimzowitsch specialist Christian Bauer. So this SOS also represents a surprise weapon for Pirc adepts!

1.e4 Nc6

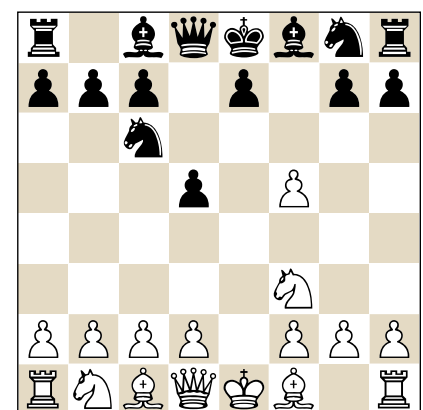
1...d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♘f3 is the classical line to meet the Pirc, and now 4...♘c6 transposes to our SOS. Please note that after 4...♙g7 5.♙e2 0-0 6.0-0, 6...♘c6!? is a fairly respectable reply that often transposes to our SOS. Instead of 6...♘c6, by far the most common replies are 6...♙g4 and 6...c6.

2.♘f3 d6

If you don’t want to play the healthy 2...e5, which is what the White players who go 2.Nf3 are hoping for, then what?

– 2...d5?! 3.exd5 ♖xd5 4.♘c3 is a dubious Scandinavian: 4...♖a5 5.♙b5!

– 2...f5?! 3.exf5 d5 is played by some Nimzowitsch specialists,



but it looks bad after 4.♙b5 ♙xf5 5.♘e5 ♙d6 6.d4, although some players have entered this line repeatedly as Black...

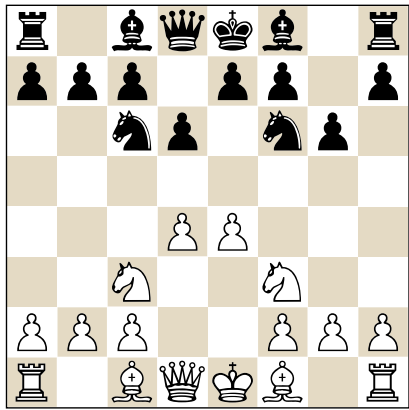
– In his book *1...Nc6!* (Everyman, 2007), Christoph Wisniewski advocates the pretty odd 2...♘f6 3.e5 ♘g4

4.d4 d6 5.h3 ♘h6. which is a line for staunch supporters (or for the foolhardy).

3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3

Here 4.d5 ♘b8 5.♘c3 g6 transposes to one of our main lines.

4...g6



So here is our Pirc surprise! Much more popular is 4...♘g4, which leads to a pleasant position for White after 5.♘e3 e6 6.h3 ♘h5 7.d5.

The most common replies now are the prophylactic 5.h3 and the natural 5.♘e2. The critical 5.d5 is only the third most popular reply (White is provoked by the early ...♘c6 and wants to 'punish' Black for his audacity). Nevertheless, we will investigate 5.d5 and 5.h3 as our main lines. For after 5.♘e2 ♘g7 6.0-0 0-0, White's main choices are 7.h3 and 7.d5, so that this line will often transpose.

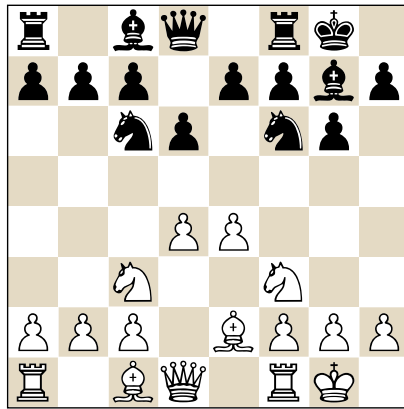
Before we delve into our main lines, a few observations on the alternatives. First two marginal lines:

- Not bad is 5.♘b5 a6 6.♘xc6+ (Black obtains an harmonious position after 6.♘a4 b5 7.♘b3 ♘g7 8.h3 0-0 9.0-0 e6 10.a3 ♘b7, Kazakov-Zajarnyi, Lvov 1998) 6...bxc6 7.0-0 ♘g7, but Black has no particular problems here.
- 5.♘c4 ♘g7 6.h3 can be met by 6...♘xe4! 7.♘xf7+ (7.♘xe4 d5) 7...♘xf7 8.♘xe4 d5! 9.♘c5 ♖d6 10.c3 e5 11.0-0 ♖e8, Gevorgyan-Grigoryan, Yerevan 2014.

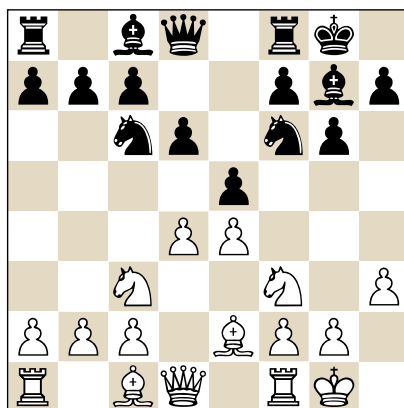
The moves 5.♘e2 and 5.♘e3 deserve more attention.

After 5.♘e2 ♘g7 6.0-0 0-0 we reach the Classical Pirc with 6...♘c6 – not

a bad achievement when you go 1...♘c6!

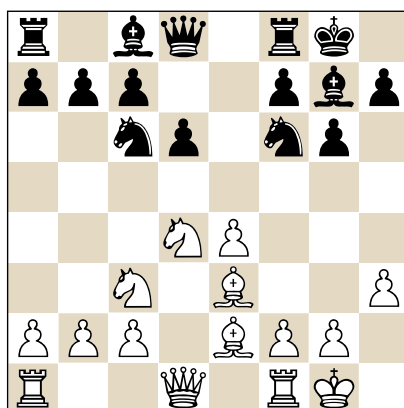


Now 7.d5 transposes to line II 5.d5 below. The other main choice is 7.h3. Naturally, if White does not chase the knight away from c6, Black goes 7...e5.



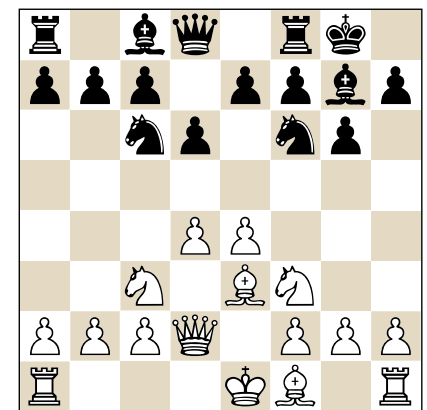
- Now 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♖xd8 ♖xd8 10.♘g5 ♘e6 is just equal, and after 11.♖fd1 h6 12.♘e3 ♘e8! 13.♘e1 ♘d4 Black was already slightly better in the model game Matulovic-Botvinnik, Belgrade 1969.

- 8.d5 ♘e7 is a good 'King's Indian' for Black (the pawn is still on c2, and ...c6 is coming).
- And 8.♘e3 exd4 9.♘xd4 is typically fine for Black.



White would like to bolster his centre with f2-f3, but having played h2-h3 already, this would weaken the dark squares. 9...♖e8 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♘d3 (11.♘f3) 11...♖b8 12.♖b1 c5 13.♖e1 ♘d7 14.♖d2 ♘c6 was fine for Black in Beerdsen-Bauer, Maastricht 2015, as was 9...♘d7 10.♘xc6?! ♘xc6 11.♘f3 ♖e8 in Klinova-M.Gurevich, Antalya 2004.

White may opt for queenside castling with 5.♘e3 ♘g7 6.♖d2 0-0.



Now White has to decide whether to prevent ...♘g4 or not:

- 7.0-0-0 ♘g4 (or 7...a6 8.♘h6 b5 9.♘xg7 ♖xg7 10.♖e1, Berkes-Kadric, Paracin 2016, and now 10...♘g4 looks best) 8.♘e2 e5 9.d5 ♘xf3! 10.♘xf3 ♘d4 gave Black decent play in Chandra-Kadric, Philadelphia 2016. Critical now was 11.♘xd4 exd4 12.♘b5 (12.♖xd4 ♘g4!), when Black has 12...♖e8 13.♖he1 ♖e5!? 14.♘xd4 ♖e7 15.♖d3 ♖e8, winning back the pawn with a favourable position.
- 7.h3 a6!? (here 7...e5 just transposes to the main line of Variation I, 5.h3) 8.0-0-0 (8.♘h6 e5 9.♘xg7 ♖xg7 10.0-0-0 ♘d7?! 11.g4 is unpleasant for Black; Jussupow-Milov, Ajaccio 2007. Better is 8...b5! 9.♘d3 e5) 8...b5 9.♘d3 e5 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.♘c5 ♘e6!? (a remarkable exchange sacrifice! 12...♖e8) 13.♖e3 ♘d7 14.♘xf8 ♖xf8 15.g4 ♘c5 16.♖b1 ♖b8 17.♘e2 ♘a4 18.♖a7 ♖c8 19.♖e3 ♖f8 20.♘c1 c5 21.c3 c4 22.♘c2 ♘c5, and Black had full compensation in Smeets-Loxine, Germany 2016.

We will go more deeply into 5.h3 (Variation I) and 5.d5 (Variation II).

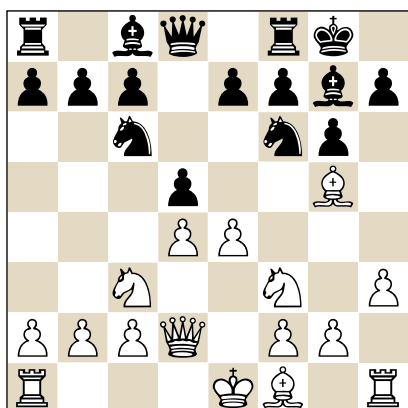
Variation I

5.h3

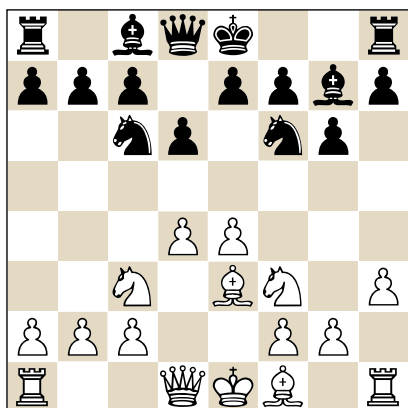
This looks pretty modest, but h2-h3 is often very useful in the Pirc. Black's queen's bishop and his king's knight would both love to move to g4.

5... ♖g7 6. ♕e3

Ah, so White played 5.h3 to prepare ♕e3, ♖d2 and 0-0-0. Here 6. ♕e2 0-0 7. 0-0 e5 transposes to 5. ♕e2. Now 6. ♕g5 h6 7. ♕e3 0-0 8. ♖d2 would be a clear improvement over the main line (White is winning a useful tempo), so Black should play like Keres did: 6...0-0 7. ♖d2 d5!



8.exd5 (8.e5 ♖e4! demonstrates why the set-up with ...d5 is strong with the bishop on g5) 8... ♖xd5 9.0-0-0, Bykhovsky-Keres, Tallinn 1965.



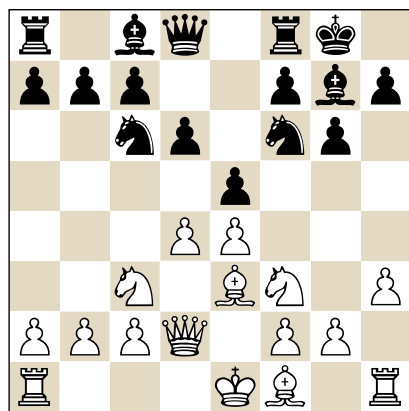
6...0-0 7. ♖d2

There is a point to 7.a4: White is hoping for 7...e5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9. ♖xd8 ♖xd8, when 10. ♕c4 is a tiny edge. However, after 7...b6!? 8.d5 ♖b4! 9.a5 bxa5 10. ♖xa5 c5 we are in a kind of Benoni; Black was better after 11. ♖a3

♖e8 (11...e6) 12. ♖a4?! f5! 13.c3 fxe4 14. ♖g5 ♖d3+ 15. ♕xd3 exd3 16. ♖xd3 ♖c7, Zhou-Bauer, England 2016.

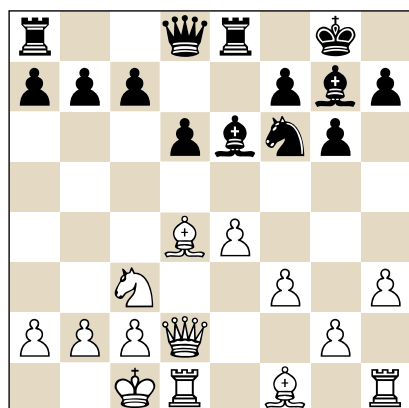
Again 7.d5 is possible, but after 7... ♖b8 8. ♖d2 c6! (having provoked White into playing d4-d5) yields Black a target to attack: 9. ♕h6 cxd5 10. ♕xg7 ♖xg7 11.exd5 ♖bd7 was equal in Soppe-Roselli, Colonia 2008.

7...e5



White faces an important choice. In theory it would be best to keep up the tension in the centre, but we will see that Black achieves good play then. Releasing the tension by taking on e5 means giving up his space advantage. Pushing the pawn also releases the tension, but it preserves White's spatial edge. The resulting position will be sharp, since White will castle on the queenside and Black on the kingside.

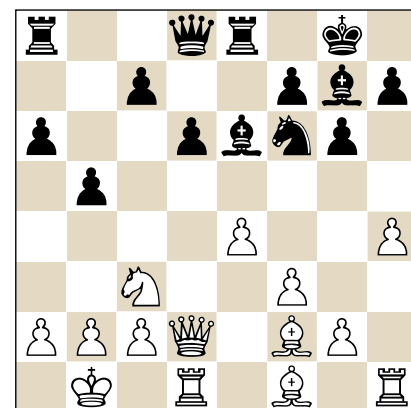
– No good is the logical 8.0-0-0 in view of 8...exd4 9. ♖xd4 ♖e8 10.f3 ♖xd4 11. ♕xd4 ♕e6.



In a line of the Philidor (played by Larsen), the exact same position exists

with the white pawn still on h2 and with White to move. That position is dangerous for Black, but in positions with opposite castling one tempo is enough!

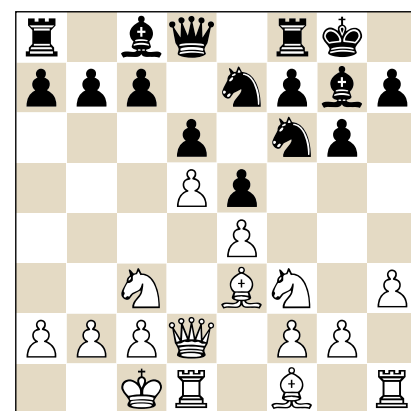
Let's see how things developed in the old game Bastrikov-Geller, Tashkent 1958 (via 1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3. ♖c3 d6!? 4.h3): 12. ♕f2?!. Prophylaxis against ...c5. 12...a6 13. ♖b1 b5 14.h4. So White has lost a full tempo!



14...c5! 15.g4 (15. ♖xd6 ♖a5 is very dangerous for White!) 15...b4 16. ♖e2, and now even better than Geller's 16... ♖a5 was 16... ♖xe4! 17.fxe4 ♖f6!.

– 8.dxe5 yields nothing after 8...dxe5 9. ♖xd8 ♖xd8. In Fedorovsky-Bauer, Germany 2017, play went 10. ♕c4 h6 (or 10... ♖e8) 11.0-0 ♕e6!? 12. ♕xe6 fxe6 13. ♖fd1 a6 14. ♖f1 ♖e8, with nearly equal chances.

– 8.d5 ♖e7 9.0-0-0 leads to sharp play.

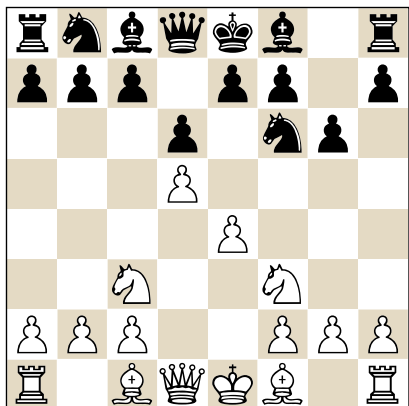


And now either 9...a6 10.g4 b5, or 9... ♖xe4!? 10. ♖xe4 f5 11.g4 fxe4 12. ♖g5 c6 13.dxc6 d5 14.cxb7 ♕xb7 15. ♖e6 ♖c8, with crazy complications in Larrea-Bachmann, Asuncion 2008.

Variation II

5.d5 As said, this is most critical line for our hybrid Pirc.

5...♘b8



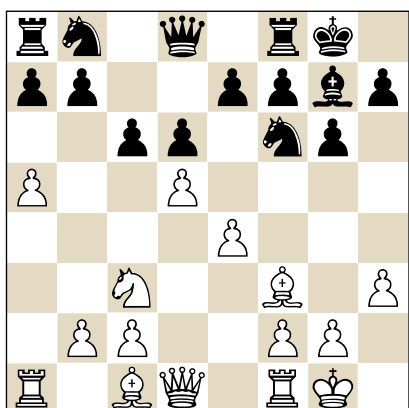
Black has lost two tempi (the knight is back on b8), but White's d-pawn has been lured forward (just like the e-pawn in the Alekhine Defence), so White has lost control of squares e5 and c5, while the pawn will be a target for a future ...c6.

6.h3

White prevents a future ...♗g4. As we have noted, White has several points at which he can play h3 or d5, so there are many transpositions. This means that ideas are more important than the exact move order.

Note that 6.♗g5 ♗g7 7.♖d2 is met by 7...c6.

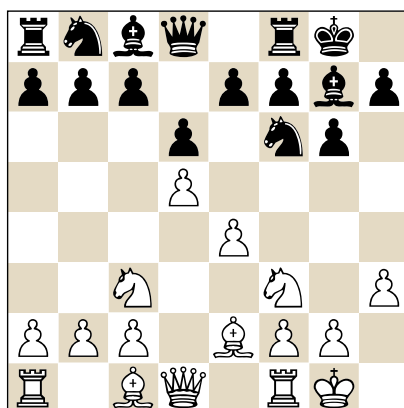
Quite common is 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.a4!? (here 8.h3 transposes once more to the main line, while after 8.♖e1 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘fd7!? 11.♗e3 c6! 12.♗d4 ♗h6 13.♖e2 ♗g7!? 14.♗xg7 ♗xg7 15.g3 ♖b6! White had nothing special in Rogozenco-Nevednichy, Baile Tusnad 2005) 8...♗g4!? (or 8...e5, as played by Smirin and Khalifman) 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 c6 11.a5



11...♖c7 (11...a6 12.♗e3 ♘bd7 13.♗d4 ♖e8 14.♖e1 was very slightly better for White in the blitz game Kasparov-Short, St. Louis 2015) 12.♗e3 ♘a6 13.♗e2 ♘c5! 14.e5?! ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 cxd5 16.♖xd5 ♗xe5 favoured Black after 17.♗xc5 dxc5 18.♗f3 ♗xb2 19.♖a2 ♗c3 20.a6 b5! 21.♖d3 b4 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8, Rozum-Kobalia, St Petersburg 2015.

6...♗g7 7.♗e2 Instead, 7.♗c4 0-0 8.0-0 e5 9.dxe6 ♗xe6 10.♗b3!? ♘c6 11.♖e1 ♖e8 was pretty equal in Ghararnian-Bauer, Nimes 2014.

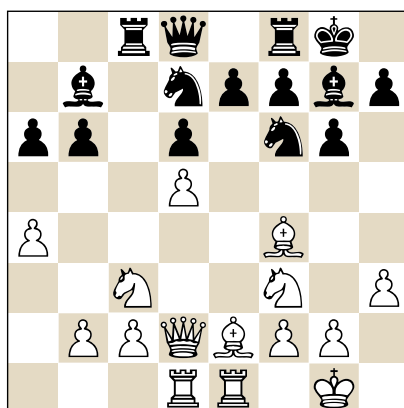
7...0-0 8.0-0



It's important to realize that Black now has two different possible set-ups. He can play for ...e5 or go for ...c6, chipping away at the advanced d-pawn. In case of the second option I really like the way in which Piket handled Black's position here.

8...e5

8...c6 9.♖e1 a6 10.a4 b6!. Piket goes for a very flexible set-up (White is better after 10...a5?! 11.♗g5 ♘bd7 12.♖d2 ♖e8 13.♖ad1, Socko-Bauer, Austria 2013) 11.♗f4 ♗b7 12.♖d2 ♘bd7 13.♖ad1 (or 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.♗c4 ♗b7, with a healthy Sicilian!) 13...cxd5 14.exd5 ♖c8.



White has no advantage here, but anyway it's best to avoid 15.♘d4 ♖xc3! 16.bxc3 ♗xd5, which may still be equal, but easier to play with Black, Van Mil-Piket, Netherlands 2001.

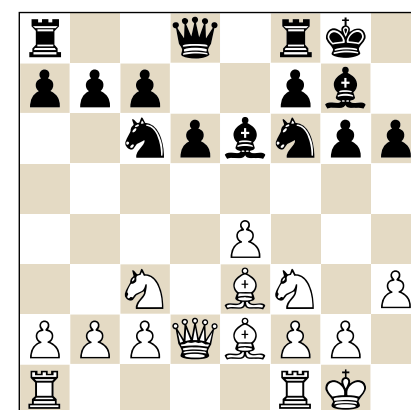
9.dxe6

By far the most common reply. If the pawn chain stays intact, play will resemble a King's Indian (with a white pawn on c2, though). Interesting is 9.♗g5!? h6 10.♗e3 ♘bd7 11.♘d2 ♘h7 12.♘c4 f5 13.exf5 gxf5 14.f4, Rachels-Gulko, Durango 1992.

9...♗xe6 10.♗g5!?

Black is absolutely OK after 10.♘d4 ♗d7 11.♗e3 ♖e8 12.♖d3 ♘c6 13.a3 ♖e7 14.♘db5 ♖ac8, Lutskan-Vitolinsh, Riga 1978.

10...h6 11.♗e3 ♘c6 12.♖d2



Here 12...♗h7 seems essential, and this is what Bauer played a couple of times. However, later he improved upon his own practice with

12...d5!

12...♗h7 13.♘d4?! ♘xd4! 14.♗xd4 c5! 15.♗e3 d5!, and now the only test is 16.♗xc5 (16.exd5 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♖xd5=) 16...♘xe4 17.♘xe4 dxe4, but Black is fully equal here: 18.♖f4 ♖e8 19.♗b5 ♖g8 20.♖ad1 ♖c8, Matlakov-Artemiev, Sochi rapid 2015. However, after 12...♗h7 White preserves some edge after 13.♖ad1!.

13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♖xd5 15.♖xd5

The problem for White is that 15.♗xh6 ♖xd2 16.♗xd2 ♗xb2 17.♖ab1 ♗d4 gains nothing: 18.♘xd4 (18.♖xb7 ♗b6) 18...♘xd4 19.♗d3 b6.

15...♗xd5 16.♖fd1 ♖ad8

and Dominguez-Bauer, Skopje 2015, ended in a draw. ■



Celebrating 50 rich years: David Navara, Yannick Pelletier, Dr. William Wirth, Etienne Bacrot, Alexander Morozevich, Rafael Vaganian, Peter Leko,

First Lady sensationally claims jubilee edition

The Biel Chess Festival, a venerable fixture on the international calendar, celebrated its 50th anniversary with another fine blend of top-level and amateur chess. The star of the festivities was Hou Yifan, who underpinned her ambitions to shine in mixed events with a spectacular win in the Grandmaster Tournament after a superb 3/3 finish. In a special report, tournament director (and grandmaster) **YANNICK PELLETIER** allows us a peek behind the scenes.



Hou Yifan, Noël Studer, Ruslan Ponomarev, Nico Georgadis, Pentala Harikrishna and Peter Burri.

Queen Biel

Ever since I became tournament director of the Biel Chess Festival five years ago, one of the questions I have been asked most is: 'How do you choose the field of the Grandmaster Tournament?' To begin with, I have to stress that I am just a member of the organizing committee. To stage a festival of such magnitude requires the work of an entire team, and it is a process that occupies us for almost the whole year. Most people merely see the

result, a dozen events extended over 10 days, but can hardly imagine what happens behind the scenes. Who would guess, for instance, that two full days are needed for several helpers to prepare the Congress Hall before the start of the festival? Or does anyone suspect that technical director Peter Burri has never slept on the last night of the past 20 festivals that he has been in charge of for the simple reason that he has to pile up all the materials that will be picked up the next morning? For us,

working at the Festival is first and foremost a matter of dedication.

As far as my responsibilities are concerned, everything begins as soon as Peter Burri provides me with the budget of the GM tournament, as well as with the number of hotel rooms we can provide for the invited participants in the Master Open (the strongest 'side-event' in Biel – this year the Master Open attracted 109 players and was won by Mateusz Bartel ahead of Vladimir Baklan and Surya Ganguly – ed.). What follows is

around 200 hours of work, consisting mostly of writing emails.

So how do I choose the field? The only word that matters is attractiveness. If you want to see fighting games, invite grandmasters with different playing styles! If you want to draw media attention, invite champions with titles, young GMs and local heroes! Are you setting up a live transmission, invite players who are talkative and have other interests besides chess. And don't forget to appoint Daniel King as moderator! No joking, I consider Daniel to be the best commentator around!

For the 50th edition, we had a slightly bigger budget, which allowed us to stage a 10-player top group instead of our usual six-player double round-robin. Unfortunately, it had become clear quite early on that our jubilee would clash with both Dortmund and St. Louis. Some ask me why Biel doesn't change its dates? Well, do you move an old person simply because a youngster wants to sit in the same chair?! To tell you the truth, the problem is caused by the shaky FIDE calendar, because regularity is not their strong point. It is obvious that the world chess federation has difficulties finding hosts for their tournaments and caring about private events is no priority.

As a result, I could simply forget about inviting two champions who have made their mark in Biel: five-time winner Maxime Vachier-Lagrave had to play the Grand Chess Tour in St. Louis, together with most members of the Top 10, while Boris Gelfand, winner of the last Biel Interzonal in 1993, felt he would be too tired after the FIDE Grand Prix in Geneva, which finished only days before Biel. And so I decided on a colourful mix of players who had once shone in Biel, and others who might do so in the future. I was also particularly glad to invite both new Swiss grandmasters Noël Studer and Nico Georgiadis, twenty years after I myself got the chance to take part in my first

'I use criteria like rating, fame or reputation, hygiene and behaviour towards other players and organizers.'

GM event here. They would certainly have a hard time against experienced champions such as David Navara, Pentala Harikrishna, Etienne Bacrot, Ruslan Ponomarev, Peter Leko or Alexander Morozevich. Two special players were invited to complete the field: the world's best woman, Hou Yifan, and Rafael Vaganian, the 65-year-old Armenian who had one of the best results in his career when he won the 1985 Biel Interzonal in a period in which he regularly occupied a place in the Top 10.

Before moving on to the games, I would like to add some further thoughts which may help some chess players see things from a different perspective. I'm fully aware that, in the eyes of many fellow grandmasters, I have now become one of those organizers who are commonly described as 'disrespectful and slow to respond'. Well, like most others, I am trying to do my best. If I have some spare time, I answer quickly. And if you don't get an invitation, there is nothing personal to it. Keep in mind that I have to turn down about 50 requests from GMs every year...

As a matter of fact, the Festival can afford to distribute merely a dozen hotel rooms to participants of the Master Open. In order to determine who will receive conditions, I use criteria like rating, fame or reputation, hygiene and behaviour towards other players and organizers. Finally, being a professional player, I can easily foresee the needs of my colleagues, both at the hotel and at the venue. This provides them with some additional comfort, because I know how harmful it can be to spend time and energy complaining during a tournament!

'The great experts'

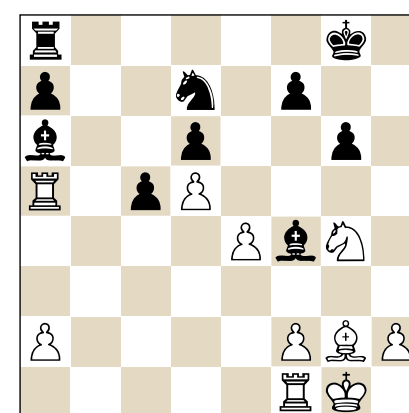
One of the characteristics of the GM tournaments in Biel has been the low drawing rate, and the 2017 edition, with 60% decisive results, proved to be no exception. In order to make sure that games will be hard-fought, draw offers are forbidden before move 40. In fact, I am not even sure whether this rule is required, since the competitors mostly show enterprising chess at the Festival.

Personally, I was very happy to see Peter Leko for the very first time in Biel. Since he dropped out of the Top 10 some years ago, the former vice-World Champion has rarely been invited to closed tournaments. Many organizers simply trust the 'great experts' who have labelled him as solid and dull, which, given his class and personality, I certainly find unjust. Peter showed some rustiness in the first half, but finished on a plus score with five decisive games. In the first round, he revealed his ambitions by spurning the Catalan in favour of the Benoni. I found the following idea very original and enterprising.

Noël Studer

Peter Leko

Biel 2017 (1)



position after 25.♖a5

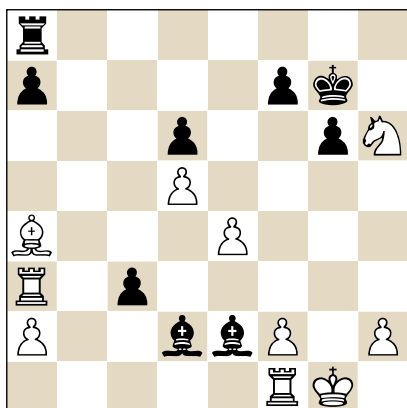
25...♙e2!

A great concept designed to support the c-pawn. Instead, 25...♙xf1 26.♙xf1 ♘b6 also seems advantageous for Black, but Leko probably thought that the presence of opposite-coloured bishops gave White good drawing chances.



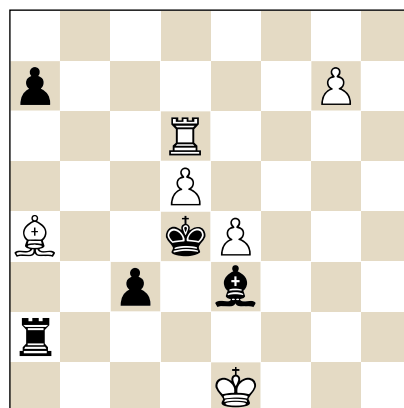
Peter Leko showed some rustiness in the first half, but finished on a plus score with five decisive games. In the first round he won a classy game with the Benoni.

26. ♖h3 ♗d2 27. ♖a3 c4 28. ♘h6+
28. ♖b1 is met by 28... ♘c5.
28... ♗g7 29. ♗xd7 c3! 30. ♗a4



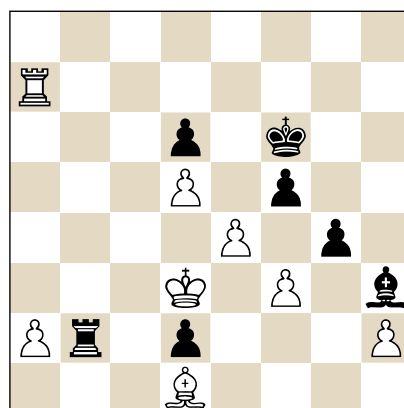
30... ♖h8?! Intending to take the knight with the rook and then attack the white king along the g-file. This is the right idea, since 30... ♗xh6 31. ♗c2 does not yield any advantage. But as Peter Leko told me afterwards, he should have included 30... ♖b8 31. ♖b3 before moving the rook to h8. This way, Black wins a tempo thanks to the threat 32... c2. Here is the beautiful main line that Peter kindly provided: 31... ♖h8 32. ♘xf7! (the point of 31... ♖h8 can be seen after 32. ♖b7 ♖xh6 33. ♖c7 ♖h5!) 32... ♗xf7 33. ♖b7+ ♗f6 34. ♖d7 ♗e5 35. f4+! ♗d4! 36. ♖xd6 g5! 37. fxg5 ♗e3+

38. ♗g2 ♗xf1+ 39. ♗xf1 ♖xh2 40. g6 ♖f2+ 41. ♗e1 ♖xa2 42. g7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

42... ♖xa4! 43. g8 ♗ ♗d3!, and wins!
31. ♘g4 ♗xg4 32. f3 ♗h3 33. ♖d1 ♖b8 34. ♖xd2 cxd2 35. ♗f2 ♖b2 36. ♗d1 g5 37. ♗e3 f5 38. ♖xa7+ ♗f6 39. ♗d3?! g4



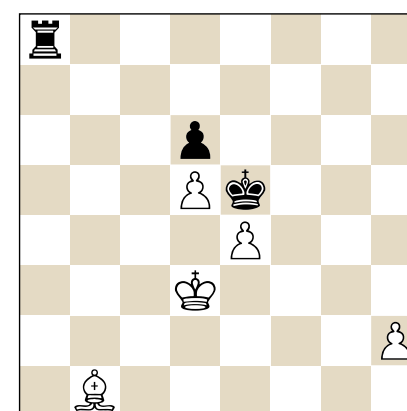
40. ♖h7?

Studer's first real mistake proves to be decisive. He had defended well so far, and 40. exf5 gxf3 41. ♗xf3 ♗xf5+ 42. ♗e3 would have secured a draw.

40... ♗g2!

This bishop forces its way to f3, so that Black wins material.

41. ♖h5 ♗xf3 42. ♖xf5+ ♗g6 43. ♖xf3 gxf3 44. ♗xf3 ♖xa2 45. ♗d1 ♗g5! 46. ♗c2 ♗f4 47. ♗xd2 ♖a8 48. ♗d3 ♗e5 49. ♗b1



White would probably have held the game if he could have brought his bishop to f5, but he has no way to achieve this.

49... ♖h8 50. ♗c4 ♖xh2 51. ♗d3 ♖h8 52. ♗c2 ♖b8 53. ♗d3 ♖a8 54. ♗c4 ♖a3 55. ♗b4 ♖h3 56. ♗c4 ♖h2 57. ♗d3 ♗f4 58. ♗b1 ♖b2 59. ♗d3 ♖d2 60. ♗c3 ♗e3 61. ♗b1 ♖d1 62. ♗c2 ♖d4 63. ♗b1 ♖a4 64. ♗c2 ♖a8 65. ♗b1 ♖c8+ 66. ♗b3 ♖b8+

White resigned.

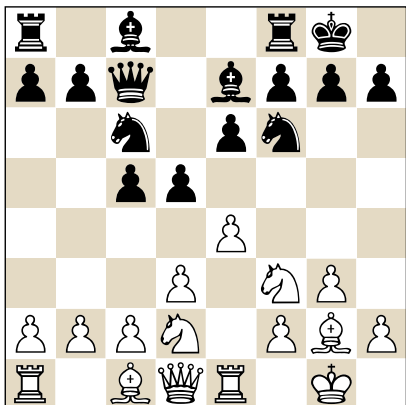
The other decisive game of the first round was played between Morozovich and Hou Yifan. The Russian wizard has scarcely competed in classical chess in the past few years, and his rating has dropped considerably. But nobody in Biel has forgotten the brilliancies that allowed him to claim first prize in the past decade no fewer than three times. Despite his lack of practice, Moro remained true to his style and did not try to play solidly. It did not always pay off, but hats off to him!

Alexander Morozevich**Hou Yifan**

Biel 2017 (1)

French Defence, King's Indian Attack

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. g3 d5 3. Bg2 e6
 4. O-O Be7 5. d3 O-O 6. Bbd2 c5
 7. e4 Nc6 8. Re1 Kc7

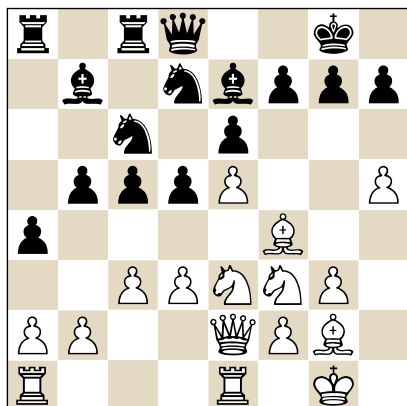


Having played this system as Black, I vaguely remember that the queen can be exposed here. And if I am not wrong, the most direct reply is 9.e5

Nd7 10. Ke2 , as played by Kasparov, amongst others.

9. c3 b6 10. e5 Nd7 11. Ke2 a5
 12. Nf1 a4 13. Bf4 Bb7 14. h4

14. Ne3 is more accurate because Black has to defend against 15. Nxd5 and cannot achieve the same harmonious piece placement as in the game. 14... Rfc8 15. Ne3 Kd8 16. h5 b5

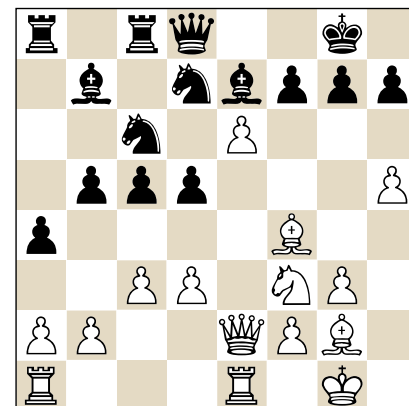


17. $\text{Nxd5}!$?

This looks like a strange decision at first, but Morozevich probably assessed his chances of devel-

oping a slow attack as not very good. Moreover, he had been very successful with such daring moves in his earlier appearances in Biel. So why not invoke positive spirits from the past?!

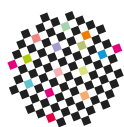
Instead, 17. $\text{h6}?$ obviously fails to 17... g5 , but 17. Ng4 h6 18. a3 was possible. 17... exd5 18. e6



18... Nf8

18... fxe6 19. Kxe6+ Kh8 20. Nh3 Nf8 21. Kf7 Ke8 22. Bxc8 Kxf7 23. Bxb7 Nd6 would probably end

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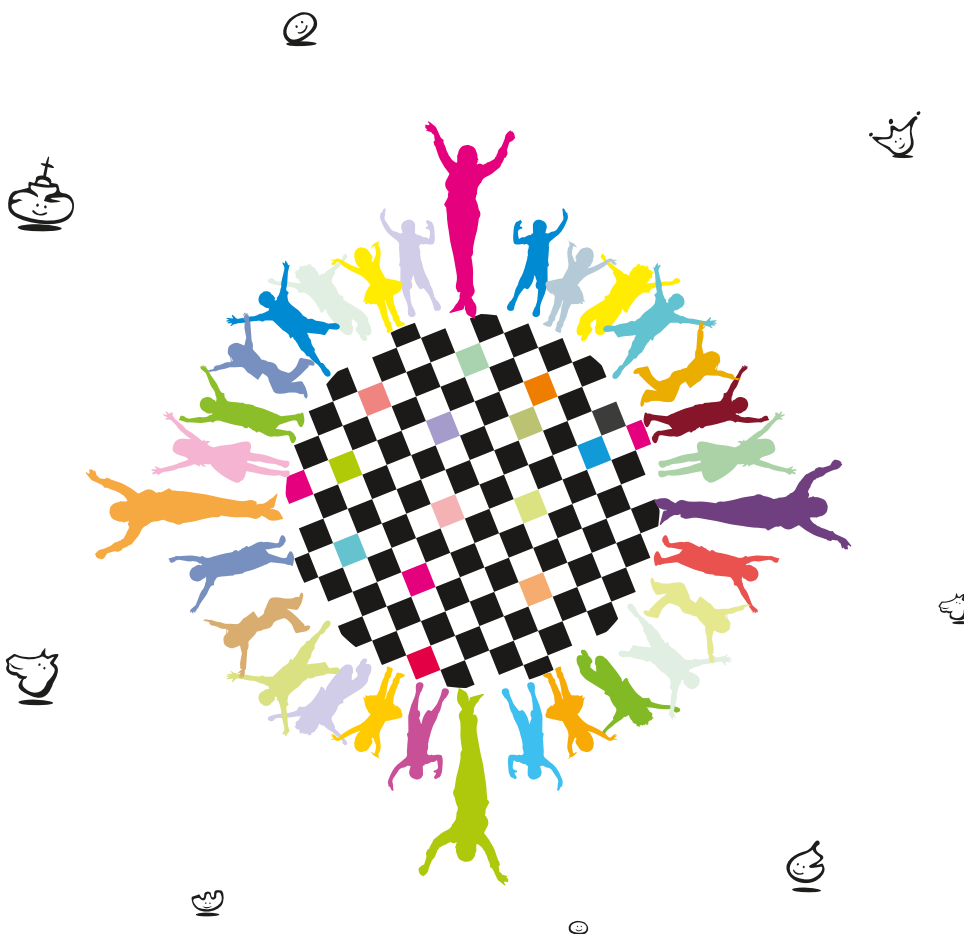


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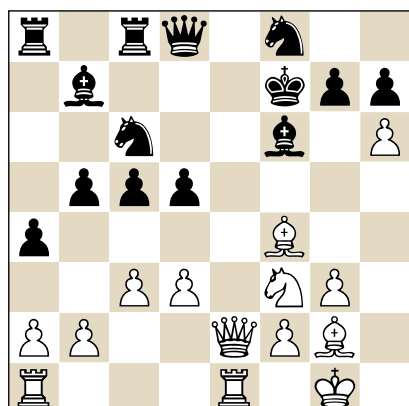
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in perpetual check somewhere after
24. ♖xa8 ♕xf4.

19. exf7+ ♔xf7 20. h6 ♕f6



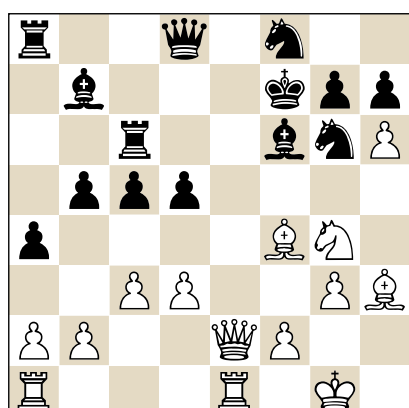
21. ♖h2?

Hou Yifan has a lot of strengthening moves at her disposal, so White should not have waited any longer to play 21. ♖h3, which was already good on the previous move. The position after 21... gxf6 22. ♖xh6 ♔g8 23. ♖e6+ ♔h8 24. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 25. ♖e3 offers chances for both sides.

21... ♖e7 22. ♖h3?!

Less effective now, since Black has a good way to neutralize this move. But she would also stand better after 22. hxf6 ♖xg7 23. ♖g4 ♖eg6 24. ♖h6+ ♔h8 25. f4 ♖d7.

22... ♖c6 23. ♖g4 ♖eg6



It is clear that White's activity is fading, and Hou Yifan duly converted her material advantage.

24. ♖d2 d4 25. hxg7 ♔xg7 26. ♖f3 ♖b6 27. ♖f5 ♖d5 28. ♖h6+ ♔f7 29. ♖xd5+ ♖xd5 30. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 31. cxd4 ♖h4 32. gxh4 ♖xh6 33. ♖e5 ♖d8 34. ♖f5+ ♖f6 35. dxc5 ♖g6 36. c6 ♖xc6 37. ♖c1 ♖dd6

White resigned.



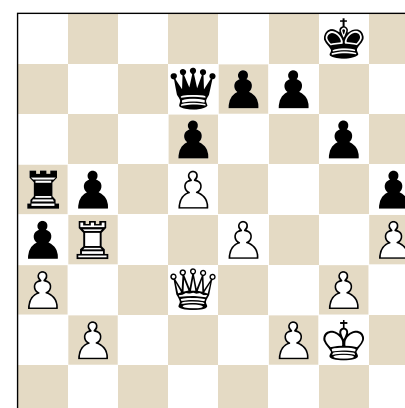
Despite his lack of practice, Alexander Morozevich remained true to his style and did not try to play solidly.

For the Chinese grandmaster, this successful start certainly came as a relief after her terrible performance at the FIDE Grand Prix in Geneva. Yet her draw in the following round against Noël Studer was anything but convincing. She got a serious advantage in the middlegame, misplayed it and eventually saved herself with some luck. Following two further draws, Hou Yifan moved into second place behind Bacrot when she beat Navara. The Czech GM played well below his usual strength and finished only in 8th place.

On the free day there was a small excursion to a small mountain overlooking Biel. As it was a sunny day, we had lunch with a beautiful view of the city, the lake and the Alps.

The next day, the former women's World Champion suffered a setback against Harikrishna in a game that seemed to be steering for a peaceful conclusion.

**Pentala Harikrishna
Hou Yifan
Biel 2017 (6)**



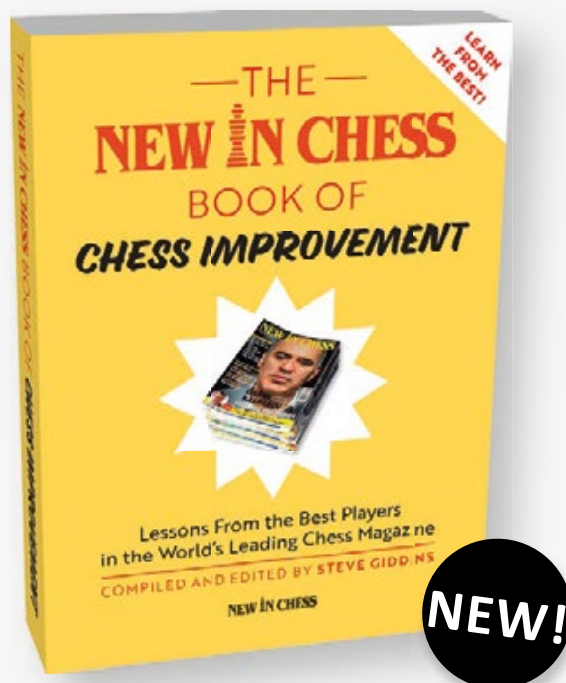
position after 32... ♖a5

33. ♖f1

Watching the game superficially from my desk, I thought that both players were shuffling pieces here and there, waiting for the 40th move to make a draw. But with Black's rook placed passively on a5, Harikrishna can try to open the kingside.

33... ♖g7 34. ♖d1 ♖c7 35. ♖d3

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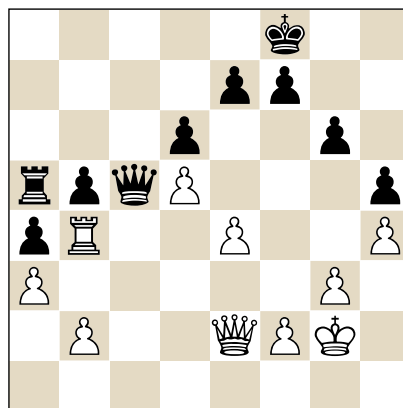
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GM Raymond Keene, *The Spectator*

"With notes by the likes of Kasparov, Kramnik, Tal and Timman, it seems unlikely that most players won't learn plenty from this compendium. (..) Apart from the instructive element, the book provides a very pleasant trip down memory lane and the opportunity to reacquaint oneself with numerous classic quotes."
CHESS Magazine (UK)

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♔c5 36. ♖e2 ♕f8

Not that the following break is killing, but in time-trouble, 36...♔c8 would have prevented White's idea, since 37.♖xb5?? fails to 37...♖a6.

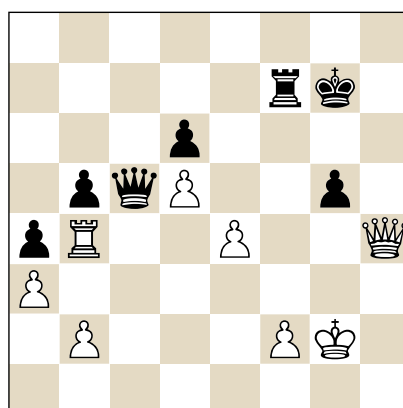


37.g4 hxg4 38. ♖xg4 ♖a8 39.h5 ♕g7 40.hxg6 fxg6?!

This loses a pawn. After 40...♖g8! Black would have been able to keep her structure intact.

41. ♕d7 ♖f8 42. ♖xe7+ ♖f7 43. ♖h4 g5?!

The computer claims that 43...♕g8 44.b3 ♖c3 is still a fight, which makes sense with both kings quite exposed.



44. ♕g3

Harikrishna is a very practical player, and I believe that his decision is very instructive. Computer-armed geniuses at home will obviously claim that 44.♖xg5+ ♕f8 45.♖d2 ♖g7+ 46.♕f1 leads to a +1 position... but just switch off your engine for a minute, sit at a chess board and try to find a good way to play after 46...♖h7. Aha, you noticed that your king is not safe!? What, your ♖b4 isn't really playing?! Now compare that with how Hari played in the game!

44... ♕g6 45. ♖e3 ♖c8

I am not sure that the rook ending after 45...♖xe3 46.fxe3 ♖e7 47.♕f3 ♕f6 48.♖xb5 g4+ 49.♕xg4 ♖xe4+ 50.♕f3 ♕e5 is completely lost, but it definitely does not inspire confidence.

46.e5! See, the rook is playing and the black king is in greater danger!

46...dxe5 47. ♖xe5 ♖c2 48. ♖e3 ♖f6 49. ♖d4 ♕f7 50. ♖e4 ♖c8 51. ♖xg5 ♖c5?

51...♖f5 was more resilient, even though this rook ending will not be saved.

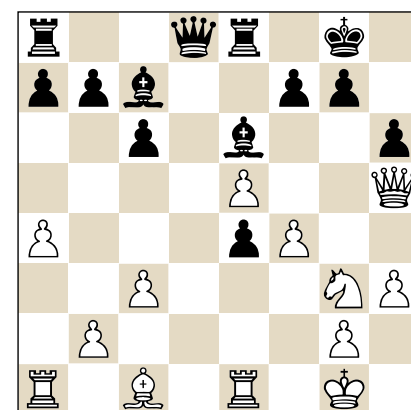
52. ♖h5+ Black resigned.

Because of this loss, the gap between Hou Yifan and the leader Etienne Bacrot grew to a full point, while Ponomarev and Harikrishna also moved ahead of her. At this point, I would not have bet a cent on her winning the event. But the Chinese grandmaster demonstrated incredible will-power and won her last three games! She started her streak by defeating the front-runner, Bacrot. The former French prodigy had played convincingly so far and had not been in danger in any game.

Hou Yifan

Etienne Bacrot

Biel 2017 (7)



position after 21. ♖g3

Hou Yifan is mounting pressure against the enemy castle, but it was important to foresee the following resource.

21... ♖b6+ 22. ♖e3 ♖d3 23. ♖f1! ♖ad8

23...♖b3 24.a5 allows the knight back into the attack.

For Hou Yifan her first victory in a strong mixed tournament comes at a crucial moment. Of late, the 23-year-old has been thinking hard about the choice she is facing: to continue playing professional chess or to pursue an academic career. Speaking about her plans for the near future, she told us that the coming months will be important. 'I am planning to continue my Master's studies abroad, in the US, and I got a good offer from Chicago University, which is much respected in the academic world. I applied for the Social Service Administration Department. I am seriously considering it, but at the same time I understand that if I am going to study there, it will take me a lot of time. And it will be even more difficult to balance playing chess and my studies, since I need to study not in my native language but in English. That would be different from when I did my undergraduate studies from 2012 to 2016. In fact, I will have to make up my mind for my enrolment in 2018 in the next two or three months. The coming year will be important for me as a professional chess player, so it is a really difficult decision. If I do well and see possibilities to go further, I might continue to focus on chess.'

Is she happy that she decided to fully focus on mixed tournaments? Is it yielding her what she had hoped for? 'It helps.

Now I can arrange my schedule flexibly, whereas before I was dependent on women's tournaments, and sometimes there would be one after the other. This had been going on for a couple of years, while the real challenges were the mixed events, from which I could learn. It's not that I don't want to play women's events. I still played the European Club Cup last year. If it's for promotional purposes or if it makes sense otherwise, I am still ready to discuss participating. I am not looking at this only from my personal perspective, from the perspective of what suits me. I also understand my responsibilities as the top women's player. I keep an open mind as regards the various tournament opportunities.'

But doesn't she regret that she gave up the world title? 'Regret is something that doesn't make sense; I normally don't think this way. It would probably have been better to keep it, but somehow the situation was such that I couldn't. After going through these cycles for six years it was time to make a decision. I hoped to be more competitive in super-

strong invitational tournaments. I got chances to play in the last few years, but mainly as a participant. I want to fight for the top places, for first place, so that people take you seriously and don't think you are only there for fun.'

Her wish to play mixed events led to a weird situation in Gibraltar this year, when she was almost exclusively paired against women and out of frustration and in protest threw her last-round game. How does she look back on that incident? 'It was not an isolated thing; there was cause and

effect. Although I am not fully sure what exactly was wrong with the whole pairing system, I have strong doubts, and I believe that the organizer and the arbiters had those doubts too. Maybe I reacted too emotionally, but I feel no shame about it and do not regret it. And it has nothing to do with the organizers, we have a good relationship. And it was not a gender issue. It was a technical issue that deserved attention.'

And since we are talking about gender issues, what is her take on the almost toxic discussion about

the alleged differences between men and women in chess or the absence thereof? 'In light of history and the current situation, I am tempted to think there is a difference, because there is this

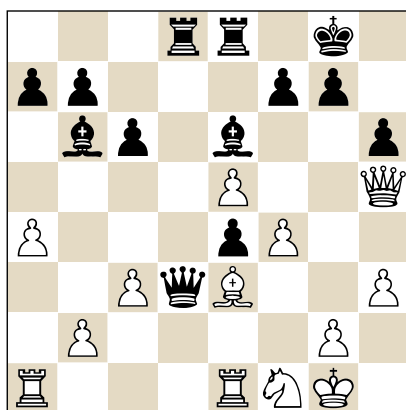
huge gap and I don't see how you can explain this with the data we have. There may be slight differences in the brain and there may be the effects of physical differences, but on the whole I believe the main thing remains the individual differences, and they are not gender related.'

As always, Hou Yifan received invaluable support in Biel from her mother Wang Xian. 'Having someone around that knows you very well always helps a lot. When you are too excited, she can calm you down. But she's also interested in chess; she's an amateur player. She understands chess and sees similarities between chess and life, which can help with your overall view.'

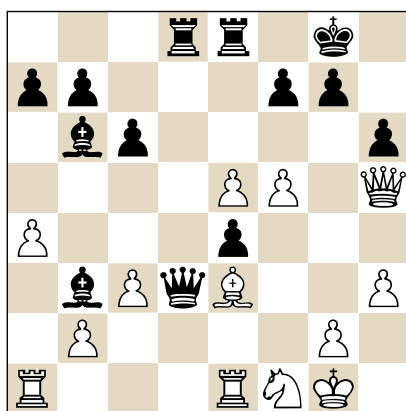
She jokes that one day her mother may be her coach, but in fact she'd love to have a trainer to work with on a regular basis. 'I have been working with some non-Chinese coaches, but not on a regular basis, and I prefer to keep their names secret. I hope to find a sponsor to get a stable long-term situation.' (DJtG)



Hou Yifan: 'I want that people take you seriously and don't think you are there for fun.'

**24.f5?!**

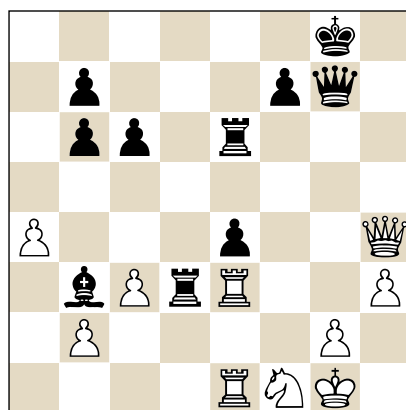
Hou Yifan misses a chance to continue her offensive effectively with 24.♙xb6 axb6 25.♘e3 ♙c8 (25...♙b3 runs into 26.♘f5) 26.♖ad1 ♔a6 27.f5 ♔a5 28.♖xd8 ♖xd8 29.f6, with an advantage.

24...♙b3

25.f6 The following pattern is thematic, and I guess that both players calculated the variation 25.e6 fxe6 26.f6 ♖f8 27.♙xb6 axb6 28.fxg7 ♙xg7 29.♘e3. Now the only way to deal with the threat of 30.♘g4 is 29...♔d2, when Black should hold after 30.♔g4+ ♙h8 31.♔xe4 ♖f2+ and 32...♖f4.

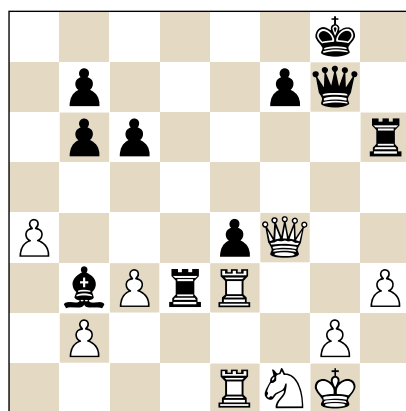
25...♔d5 26.♙xb6 axb6 27.fxg7 27.♔g4 g6 28.♔xe4 ♖xe4 29.♖xe4 c5 is OK for Black.

27...♔xe5 28.♔xh6 ♖xg7 29.♔h4 ♖d3 30.♖e3 ♖e6 31.♖ae1 Black's king is slightly exposed he and will have to be careful. Hou Yifan correctly refrains from winning a pawn with 31.♖xd3 exd3 32.♔d8+, since Black would have enough play after 32...♖f8 33.♖xd3 ♖c5+ 34.♙h2 ♖f2 35.♖g3+ ♖xg3+ 36.♘xg3 ♖e5.



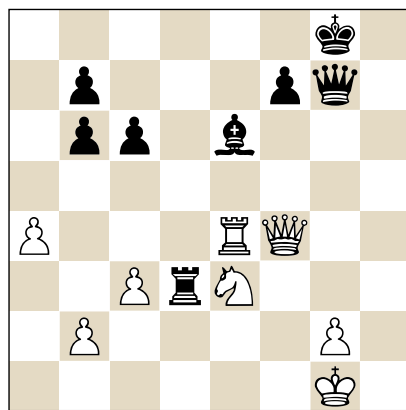
31...♖h6?! This position is obviously hard to handle in time-trouble, and it is small wonder that Bacrot makes mistakes. This was the right moment to bring back the bishop to the centre with 31...♙d5, when Black seems to be fine after 32.♘g3 ♖h6!.

32.♖f4! Again spurning a pawn in order to keep the queens on, since Hou Yifan considered 32.♖xe4 ♙d5 33.♖g4 ♖xg4 34.hxg4 too slight an edge.

**32...♖xh3?!**

32...♙d5 would have been better again, even though White keeps pressure with 33.♖g3 ♖xg3 34.♘xg3 ♖g6 35.♙h2.

33.♖xd3 ♖xd3 34.♖xe4 ♙e6 35.♘e3



35...♖d8? Missing a lethal threat. After 35...♖d2 36.♖e5 ♖h7 Black's

position would have remained difficult in a practical game, but tenable with good defending.

36.♖e5 Black resigned.

The outcome of this encounter led to a general regrouping and put four players in the lead with +2, amongst them 21-year-old Nico Georgiadis! Both he and Noël Studer (20) are clearly the best hopes for Swiss chess, if you allow me to use that word to describe grandmasters! I thought they would perform decently in their first really strong tournament, but eventually they had completely opposite results. Studer lost way too many games by missing good opportunities. This was actually their only common point. Georgiadis, too, could have scored a few more victories if he had converted his superior positions against Harikrishna and Morozovich. It should be noted that Nico is not a professional player, since he will start his third year at Zurich University after the summer.

In the penultimate round, both Harikrishna and Hou Yifan won their games. Here is her flashy win against Rafael Vaganian, with her own comments.



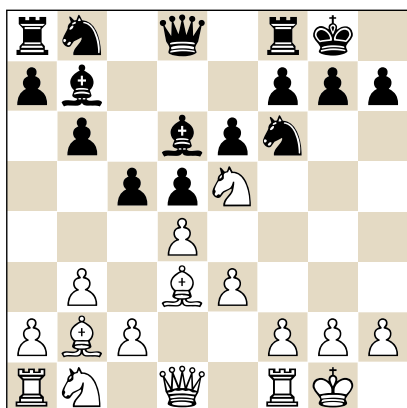
NOTES BY
Hou Yifan

Rafael Vaganian
Hou Yifan
Biel 2017 (8)
Colle Opening

It is always a precious experience to play against the great players from an earlier generation, and indeed Vaganian, born in the 1950s, was one of the top grandmasters of his time. Playing against someone whom you had read about at a very young age always makes things a little bit different. Irrespective of the tournament situation, I was looking forward to an interesting game.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3 b6 4.♙d3

♙b7 5.0-0 d5 6.b3 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♘e5 c5

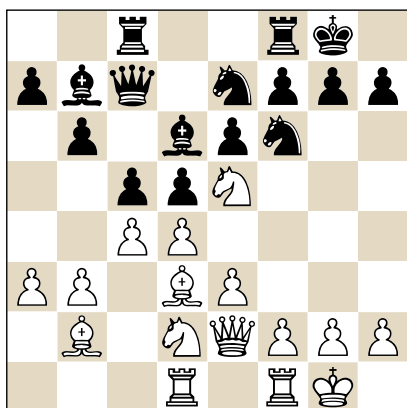


9.♙e2 An unusual move, since the queen is normally supposed to go h3 via f3 after f2-f4.

Previously, Vaganian had twice played 9.♘d2 ♘c6 10.a3, which is also the main line in this set-up.

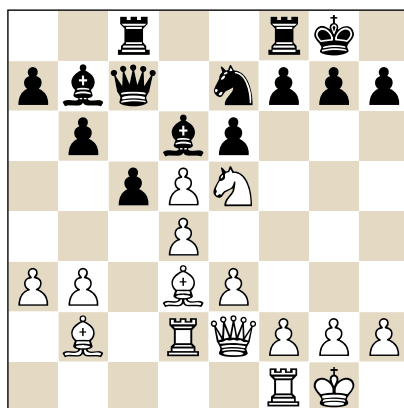
9...♘c6 10.a3 ♖c8 11.♘d2 ♘e7 12.♖ad1 ♙c7 With the idea of opening the c-file and then playing ...♘e4.

13.c4



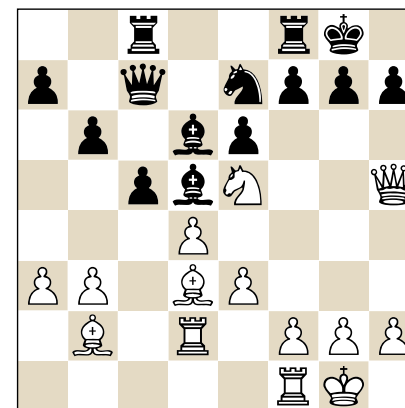
13...♘e4 Here I spent quite some time choosing between two possibilities. Obviously, Black should ideally create an isolated d4-pawn, so at first I intended to play 13...cxd4 14.exd4 dxc4 15.bxc4. Other moves yield the d5-square to Black, with a satisfactory position. And here Black can play 15...♙xe5! (the reason why I didn't go for this line was 15...♖fd8 16.f4, when White's position is to be preferred, as he can slowly improve his position, while I would have to find ways to improve mine) 16.dxe5 ♘d7 17.♘e4 ♙xe4! 18.♙xe4 ♖fd8, and this double-edged position gives Black at least equal chances.

14.cxd5 ♘xd2 15.♖xd2



15...♙xe5 I was still trying to figure out a forcing way to saddle White with an isolated pawn, but without success: 15...cxd4 16.♖c2!, and suddenly there is no place for the queen to keep the pressure on the e5-knight: 16...♙d8 17.♙xd4 ♖xc2 18.♙xc2 ♙xe5 19.♙xe5 ♙xd5 20.f4, and with active play Black is doing OK, but no more than that.

16.♙h5 In this interesting position, in which White has a bunch of possibilities, this was the most natural and attractive move. White's attack will be dangerous if the e5-knight can be protected before the a1-h8 diagonal is opened.



16...f5!?

But looking more deeply into the position, it is not difficult to understand that, objectively, the best way is to withdraw the knight from e5 to avoid the isolated pawn, when there are no threats to be worried about: 16.♘f3 cxd4 17.♘xd4! ♙xh2+ 18.♙h1 ♙e5 19.♘b5 ♙b8 20.♙xh7+ ♙xh7 21.♙h5+ ♙g8 22.♙xe5, with equal chances.

Another candidate move was 16.♘c4!?, when after 16...♙xc4 17.♙xc4 cxd4 18.g3! White will have compensation for the pawn thanks to the bishop pair, especially once the diagonal for the one on b2 is opened.

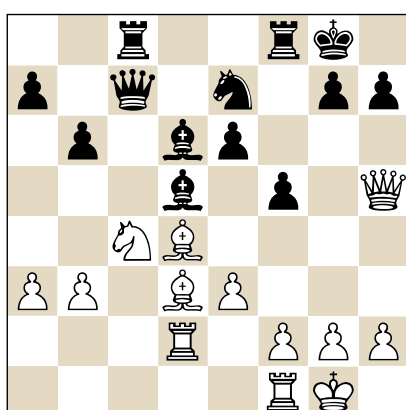


Hou Yifan defeated Rafael Vaganian with a great tactic. 'Playing against someone whom you had read about at a very young age always makes things a little bit different.'

A interesting decision, which looks a bit tricky at first.

My original intention was 16... g6 17.♔h6 (17.♔h4 seemed to me the better square, since it will give support to ♕f6+ in the future, but... 17...♙xb3 18.♖g4 c4! was what I had missed: 19.♕f6+ ♖g7 20.d5 c3!, blocking the a1-h8 diagonal and guaranteeing the safety of the king) 17...♙xe5 (other moves yield nothing: 17...f6 18.♕c4 cxd4 19.♔h3! or 17...cxd4 18.♖c2) 18.dxe5 ♙xb3 19.♙e4, and this is a typical position in which the attacking side gets many more practical chances than the engine's evaluation suggests: White stops the black c-pawn and pushes his kingside pawns to open files, while waiting for the right moment to invade via the dark squares. Black's material advantage is not the most important consideration here.

17.♕c4 cxd4 18.♙xd4



Starting from this point, I began to look for new targets in White's position, and one obvious target is the basic lack of coordination of

White's pieces. At first I was mainly trying to make use of the d-file, where the bishops are doubled, plus the weak pawns on the queenside. Later I realized that the queen on h5 and the rook on d2 could also be targets.

18...♕g6

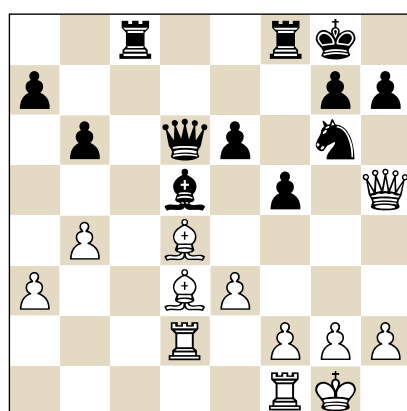
A first, hidden, step, trying to preserve the dark-squared bishop. So it seemed quite natural that Vaganian flashed out:

19.♕xd6

Knowing the outcome, it would have been better to play 19.♙b2 ♙e7, with an easier game for Black.

19...♔xd6 20.b4?

This was the move I had been expecting, and it happened to be the only mistake in the game! Apparently, this had been Vaganian's plan from around when he played 16.♔h5. If there's no immediate way to clarify the position, there is a long battle ahead, slightly favouring White. Objectively speaking, White should have given a pawn to get his pieces back into the fight: 20.♙a6 ♖b8 21.♔e2 ♙xa3 22.♖a1 ♔e7, with some compensation and some chances of holding, although maybe not enough.

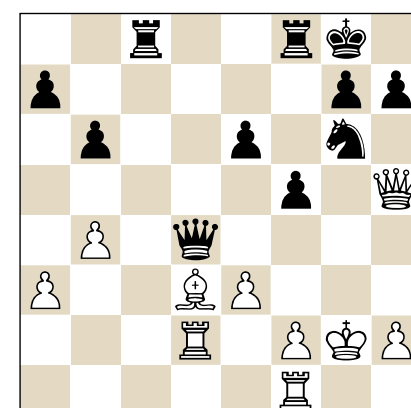


20...♙xg2!

The key move. From this point onwards, some calculations were required to guarantee the success of this combination, which did not always follow in my recent games.

Vaganian told me he had been expecting 20...♕e5, preparing to bring the f-rook into play via the 6th rank, when after 21.♔g5 ♖f6 22.f3 White somehow maintains the position and repels all Black's threats.

21.♔xg2 ♙xd4



22.♔xg6

Other options might prolong the game but make no sense: 22.exd4 ♕f4+ 23.♕f3 ♕xh5 24.♖e1 ♔f7 or 22.♔xh7+ ♔xh7 23.exd4 ♖c3, when White has too many weak pawns.

22...♔d5+ 23.e4 fxe4

The rook on d2 helps to make the combination a success. This was the hidden move Black needed to find before taking on g2. Now loss of material is unavoidable and it is already difficult to suggest a good defence.

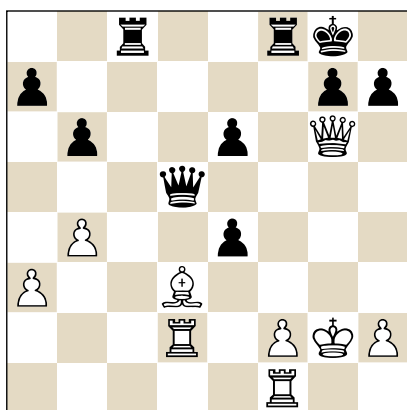


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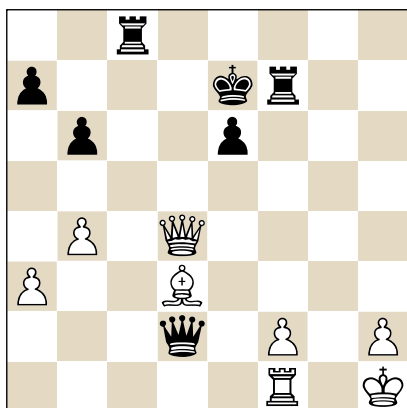
24. ♖xe4 Going for a rook ending would still have left White something to hope for: 24. ♖a6 hxc6 25. ♖xd5 exd5 26. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 27. ♖d1 ♖d8. But it would have been very little.

Also hopeless is 24. ♖xe4 ♖xd2 25. ♖xh7+ ♖f7 26. ♖g6+ ♖e7 27. ♖xg7+ ♖f7.

24... ♖g5+ 25. ♖h1 ♖xd2 26. ♖xh7+ ♖f7 27. ♖g6+

27. ♖g1 will always run into 27... ♖h6, since, luckily enough, the pawn is not on h6: 28. ♖e4 ♖c1, and it's game over.

27... ♖e7 28. ♖xg7+ ♖f7 29. ♖d4



29... ♖f4

It took a while before I could persuade myself to make this simple move. I felt attracted to 29... ♖f4!?, until I realized that 30. ♖g7+ ♖d6 31. ♖b5! would cause Black serious trouble.

30. ♖xf4 ♖xf4 31. f3 ♖d4 32. ♖e4 ♖d2 33. ♖g1 ♖c3

White resigned.

■ ■ ■

The pairings for the last round contained maximum intrigue, because the two leaders, Harikrishna and Hou Yifan, were to play with white against their pursuers



Normally speaking, morning games are no friends of Etienne Bacrot's, but this time it was his opponent who blundered badly in the last round.

Bacrot and Georgiadis. Normally speaking, I might have written here that morning games (the last round started at 11 am) are no friends of Etienne Bacrot's, but this time it was his opponent who blundered badly on move 21...

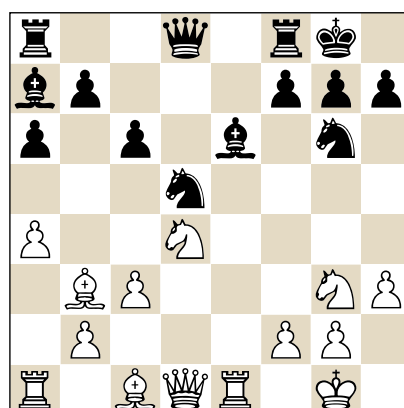
Pentala Harikrishna

Etienne Bacrot

Biel 2017 (9)

Giuoco Piano

1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3. ♖c4 ♖c5 4.c3 ♖f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.a4 ♖a7 8. ♖e1 0-0 9.h3 ♖e7 10. ♖bd2 ♖g6 11. ♖f1 c6 12. ♖b3 d5 13. ♖g3 ♖e6 14.exd5 ♖xd5 15.d4 exd4 16. ♖xd4

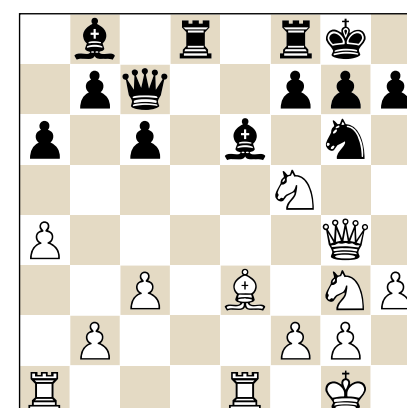


16... ♖c7

With this tactical finesse, Black finishes his development and stands well. 17. ♖xe6? fails to 17... ♖xf2+! 18. ♖xf2 fxe6+ and ... ♖xg3.

17. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 18. ♖df5 ♖ad8 19. ♖g4 ♖e6 20. ♖e3 ♖b8

Black is slightly better thanks to his bishop pair, but the next move loses at once.



21. ♖c5?? ♖xf5 22. ♖xf5

Harikrishna had obviously missed that the bishop cannot be saved after 22. ♖xf5 ♖d5.

22... ♖h2+ 23. ♖f1 ♖d2 24.f4 h5 25. ♖f3 ♖h1+ 26. ♖g1 ♖a7 27. ♖e3

Also losing is 27. ♖e3 ♖h4 28. ♖g3 ♖xe3 29. ♖xe3 ♖xg2.

27... ♖xe3 28. ♖xe3 ♖e8 29. ♖c4 ♖c2 White resigned.

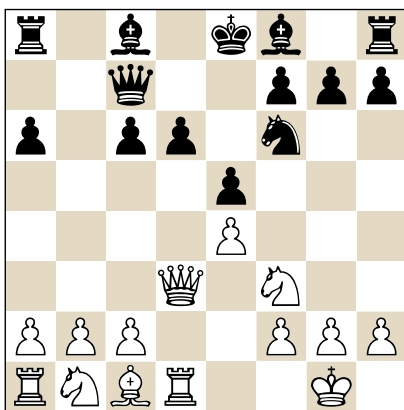
Meanwhile, Georgiadis, as Black, got an edge against Hou Yifan, but he misplayed the position and was left struggling with a bad pawn structure.

Hou Yifan
Nico Georgiadis
 Biel 2017 (9)
 Sicilian Defence

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4 ♘c6 5.♙b5 a6

This semi-forgotten move is less common than 5...♙d7. It has been played by some great names of the 50s and 60s, and has recently become fashionable again.

6.♙xc6+ bxc6 7.0-0 e5 8.♙d3 ♘f6 9.♖d1 ♙c7

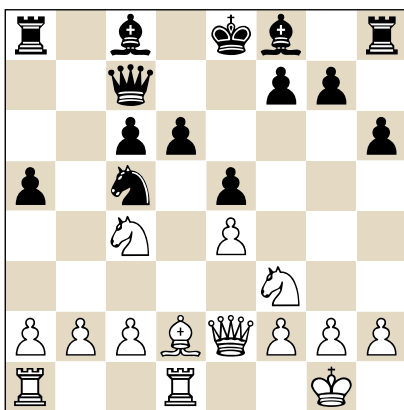


10.♙g5 Most predecessors have tried a strategy based on c2-c4, but doing without it also looks sensible.

10...♘d7 11.♙a3

It would have been more accurate to choose d2 as a path to c4, because this would have allowed White to meet 11...♘c5 with 12.♙c3.

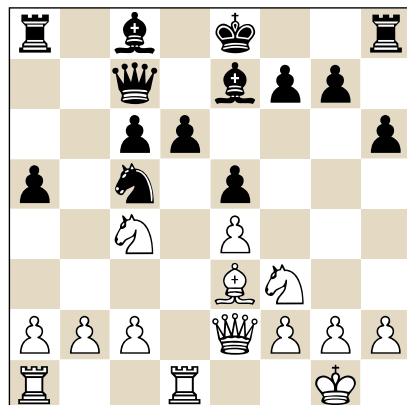
11...♘c5 12.♙e2 h6 13.♙d2 a5 14.♘c4



14...♙e7?!

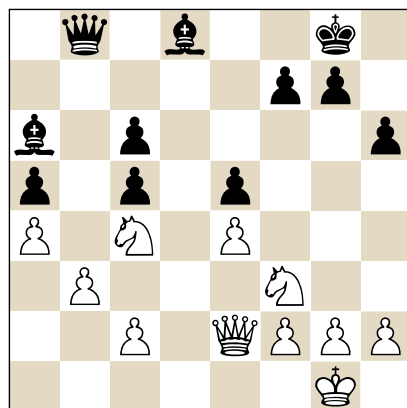
After 14...♙a6 Black's position would have been preferable.

15.♙e3



15...♙a6?! When things go well in a tournament, one tends to lose one's sense of danger. Black will have no prospects after the destruction of his pawn structure. 15...♘e6 would have kept the balance.

16.♙xc5 dxc5 17.♖d2 0-0 18.♖ad1 ♗fd8 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.♖xd8+ ♙xd8 21.a4 ♙b8 22.b3



22...♙b4? Georgiadis forgot that the knight could come back to f3 on move 24. 22...♙f6 was more resilient, but the black position obviously remains quite sad.

ient, but the black position obviously remains quite sad.

23.♘fxe5 ♙f6 24.♘f3 ♙d4 25.♙d3 ♙f8 26.♙f1 ♙xc4 27.♙xc4 ♙xc4+ 28.bxc4 ♙b2 29.♘d2 Black resigned.

And so the outcome of this final round produced one clear winner, because Hou Yifan finished first with 6½ points, ahead of Bacrot (6) and Harikrishna (5½). This is Hou Yifan's greatest success in the 'men's circuit' so far. Even though she has scored higher rating performances on earlier occasions, a victory definitely ranks higher.

A comparison with Judit Polgar is tempting, but I would say that the Chinese grandmaster still has a long way to go. To put things in perspective, take Judit's first great international win in Madrid in 1994, when the Hungarian was just 17 and finished ahead of four members of the world Top 10!

Hou Yifan is certainly a beautiful addition to the prestigious list of winners in Biel, and a further encouragement to keep working for the durability of the event. For years, the Festival has mostly survived thanks to the subventions of the town. Such support is far from obvious these days. There were reasons to fear that the 50th edition would be used as an excuse by politicians to stop their financing. Fortunately, this turned out not to be the case, so we are glad to announce that the 51st International Chess Festival will take place from July 21st until August 1st next year! ■

Biel 2017

Biel 2017													cat. XVI			
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR	
1	Hou Yifan	IGM	CHN	2666	*	1	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	6½	2809
2	Etienne Bacrot	IGM	FRA	2715	0	*	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	6	2763
3	Pentala Harikrishna	IGM	IND	2737	1	0	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	5½	2715
4	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM	UKR	2699	½	½	0	*	1	½	0	1	½	1	5	2682
5	Peter Leko	IGM	HUN	2678	½	½	½	0	*	½	1	0	1	1	5	2685
6	Nico Georgiadis	IM	SUI	2496	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	1	5	2705
7	Alexander Morozevich	IGM	RUS	2675	0	0	½	1	0	½	*	1	1	1	5	2685
8	David Navara	IGM	CZE	2737	0	½	½	0	1	½	0	*	1	½	4	2592
9	Rafael Vaganian	IGM	ARM	2562	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	*	1	2	2435
10	Noël Studer	IM	SUI	2493	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	*	1	2311



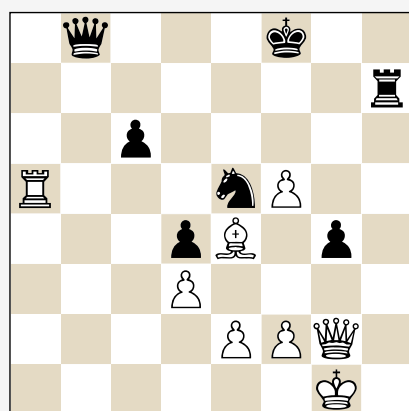
MAXIMIZE your Tactics

with Maxim Notkin

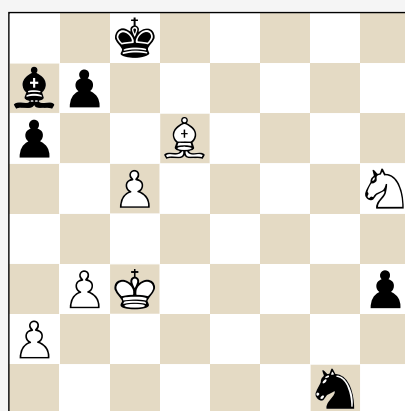


Find the best move in the positions below

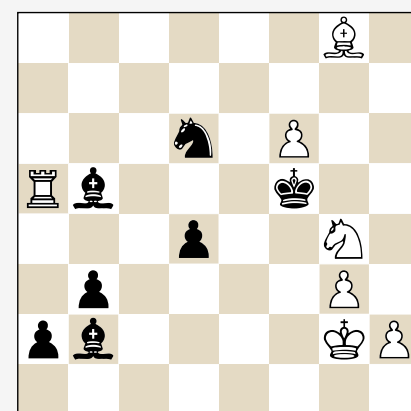
Solutions on page 77



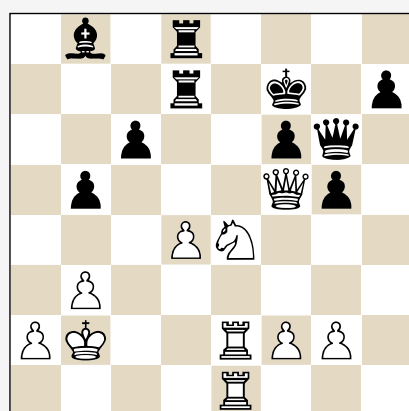
1. Black to move



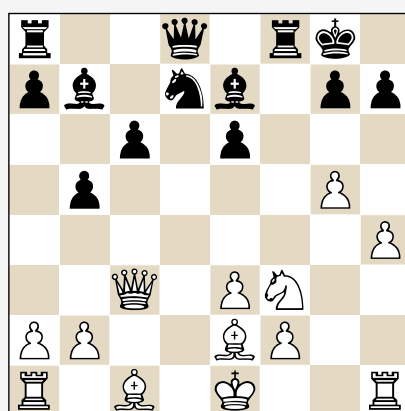
2. Black to move



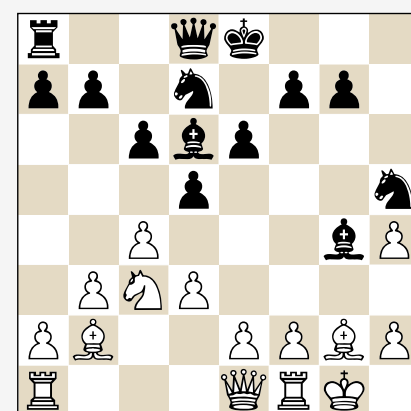
3. White to move



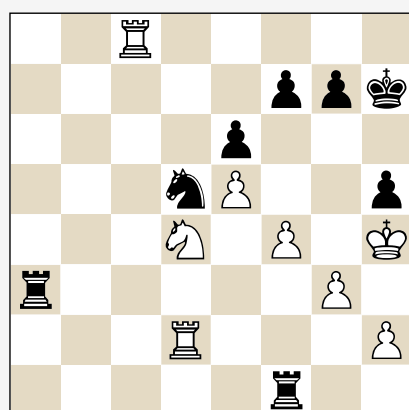
4. White to move



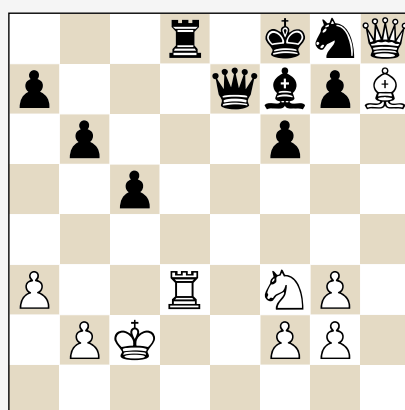
5. Black to move



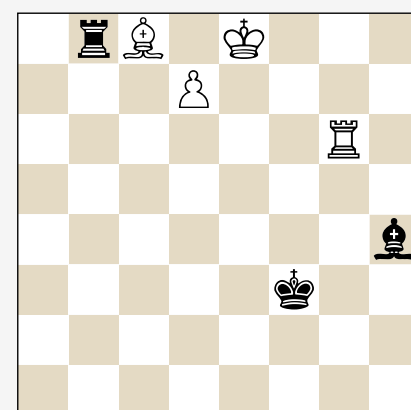
6. Black to move



7. Black to move



8. White to move



9. White to move



Judit Polgar

A fighter you can rely on

Continuing her memories of her tenure as Hungarian captain, **JUDIT POLGAR** looks at Zoltan Almasi's qualities and successes as a team player.

Zoltan Almasi has been my chess rival and colleague ever since our childhood. We had our first over-the-board battle at the age of 12 and we played on the Hungarian Olympiad team together for the first time at the age of 18, in Moscow in 1994. Over the years I got to know the multiple sides of Zoltan's complex personality pretty well.

Almasi has a natural understanding of the game and a healthy classical approach, while at the same time he is a fearless fighter. His physical condition is excellent and his mental strength outstanding. I believe that, with proper training, he could have become a stable world top-10 player.

Almasi loves to play Olympiads and lets himself be involved in the competition in various ways. He is always ready to play or help his colleagues, no matter how tired he is. As a captain, I highly treasured this aspect, because in the course of team events there are many moments when not all players feel strong enough to step into the arena...

Almasi's weak spots are of an emotional

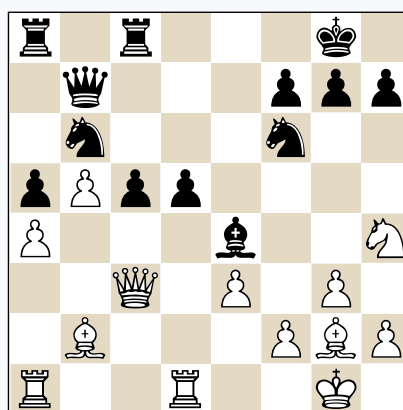
nature. Sometimes he gets too involved emotionally, and this can affect him in the game he is playing or even in the next one in the tournament.

In both events in which I acted as Hungarian captain, I put Almasi on third board. While at the European Teams in Reykjavik, this was in accordance with the ratings, at the Baku Olympiad it was a purely tactical decision. I knew that Almasi usually needs a few rounds to warm up and get into his optimal form, and every time he confirmed this outstandingly. In both events, he won three games in a row during the decisive rounds (6, 7 and 8 in Reykjavik and 7, 8 and 9 in Baku)! Not an easy task against strong opponents for most players ...

The games (with Black!) examined below are precisely from these winning streaks. They all feature a familiar strategic pattern, very typical for Almasi. In the Nimzo-Indian he gladly exchanges his bishop and then refrains from an early occupation of the centre. Black focuses on gaining control of the light squares and restricting White's dark-squared bishop.

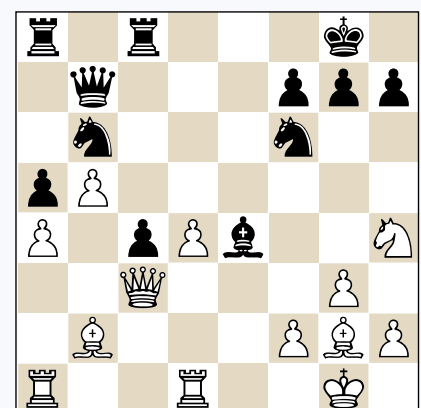
In the following example he quickly managed to unbalance a usually solid player.

Renier Vazquez
Zoltan Almasi
Reykjavik World Teams 2015



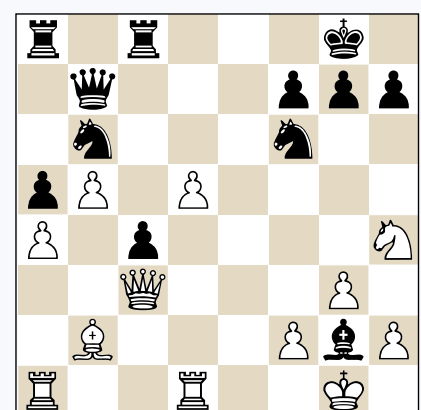
position after 20. d4

20...d4 21.exd4 c4! Almasi played this thematic pawn sacrifice without hesitation, although actually things are not entirely clear. It is typical for him not to shy away from principled operations, especially when he feels in good form.



22.d5? A typical case of letting oneself be convinced of the correctness of one's opponent's plan. Of course Black has good compensation for the pawn due to his control of d5, but White was by no means worse. After 22. ♖e1!, as pointed out by Almasi, the fireworks do not necessarily work out well for Black. For instance: 22... ♖bd5 23. ♙xe4 ♖xe4 24. ♙f3 ♖d2 25. ♙e2 c3 26. ♙xc3 ♖b3 27. ♙a3 ♖xc3 28. ♙e5, for if 28... ♖d2?, there is 29. ♙xc3!, based on the back rank weakness.

22... ♙xg2

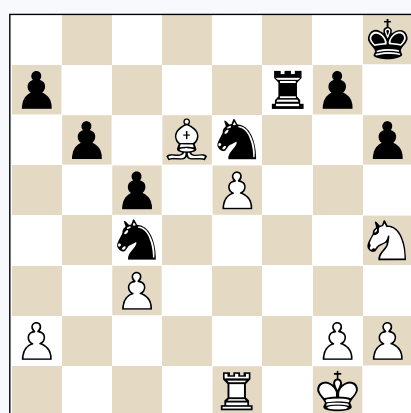


23. ♖f5? Trying to justify the previous move tactically. True, Black has a great game after 23. ♖xg2 ♖bxd5 24. ♙f3 c3.

23...♘bxd5 24.♖xd5 ♕xd5 25.♘g7 White must have missed that after 25.♘h6+ gxf6 26.♖xf6 Black repels the attack and wins with 26...c3!. **25...♘e4 26.♖d4 ♘g5! 27.♖f6 ♘h3+ 28.♔f1 ♕g2+ 29.♔e1 ♖e4+** 0-1.

In the next round, Almasi continued his winning streak against a high-calibre opponent.

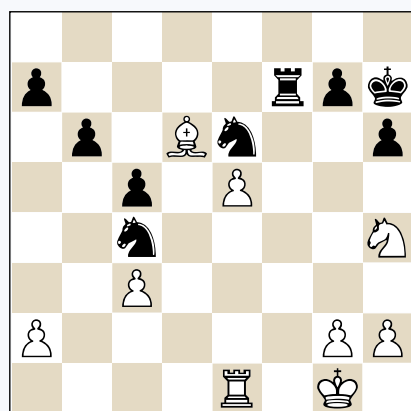
Arkadij Naiditsch
Zoltan Almasi
Reykjavik World Teams 2015



position after 33.♖e1

Black's middlegame strategy has obviously been crowned with success. In the endgame he has two beautiful knights on light squares, whereas the white bishop is a mere spectator. With his next move Almasi restricts the white knight, too.

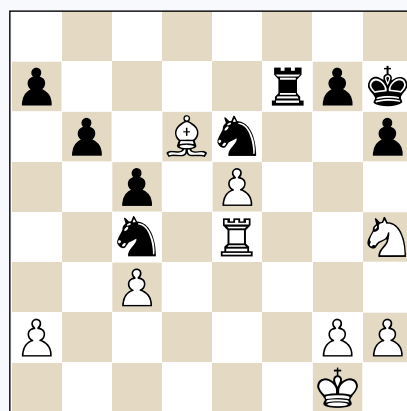
33...♔h7! As pointed out by Almasi, 33...g5 34.♘g6+ ♔g7 35.♘e7, followed by g4 and ♘f5, would offer White some activity.



34.♖e4? With three seconds on his clock Naiditsch commits the decisive mistake. His wish to question the stability of the knight is understandable, but he had overlooked that the knight has

‘Zoltan Almasi has a natural understanding of the game and a healthy classical approach, while at the same time he is a fearless fighter.’

dynamic virtues as well. But it's true that his position would also be far from easy after 34.♘f3 g5 35.♖e4 ♖f4, followed by the king's advance to f5.



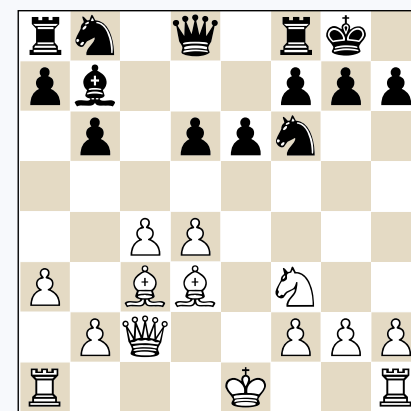
34...♘d2! Due to the threat 35...♖f1, mate, the rook has to return. **35.♖e1 g5 36.♖d1** After 36.♘f3 ♖xf3 37.gxf3 ♘xf3+ Black wins a pawn, while keeping the good knight versus the bad bishop. **36...♘e4 37.♘f3 ♘xc3** Almasi has won a pawn, and on move 53 he also won the game.

After winning the 2014 Tromsø Olympiad, the Chinese squad performed rather modestly in Baku. The match against our team, at a point when they were half a point behind us, was practically their last opportunity to come back into the fight for a high classification.

Li Chao
Zoltan Almasi
Baku Olympiad 2016
Nimzo-Indian

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♕b4 4.♘f3 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♕d3 ♕b7 7.♕d2 d6 A similar set-up as in the previous two games, of which we have only seen

fragments. **8.♖c2 c5 9.a3 ♕xc3 10.♕xc3 cxd4 11.exd4**



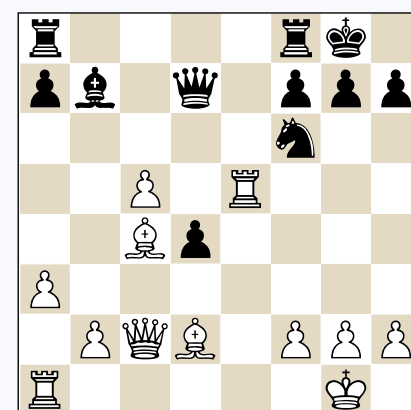
11...d5 Objectively, 11...♕xf3 12.gxf3 d5 was stronger, spoiling White's structure and absolving Black from the danger of getting a passive bishop on b7. But giving up the light-squared bishop so easily is not Almasi's style. As we will see, a more glorious fate was reserved for this bishop, even though it all happened in a critical position!

12.c5 The most principled reaction, since otherwise Black would have comfortable control of d5.

12...♘c6 13.0-0 bxc5 14.dxc5 d4

In order to activate his bishop Black needs to expose his centre, which would not have been an issue in the line above.

15.♕d2 ♖d5 16.♖fe1 e5?! A careless move, losing a pawn. 16...a5 was better. **17.♕c4 ♖d7 18.♘xe5 ♘xe5 19.♖xe5**



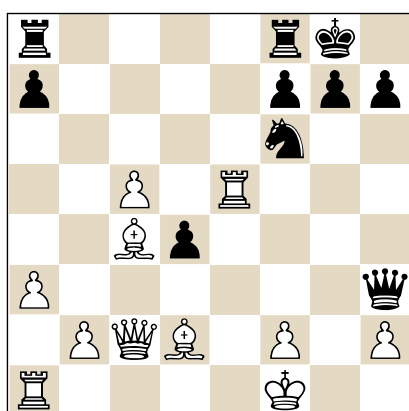
Confronted by the unfavourable course the game has taken, Almasi now took a reckless decision, much in the spirit of his central break in the first game in this column.

19...♕xg2! Objectively, the sacrifice is not entirely sound, but psychologically it is perfectly justified. The Chinese team

was probably focused on putting pressure on us, and now suddenly Li Chao was pushed into the role of defender in a unclear position.

20. ♖xg2 ♕g4+ **21.** ♖h1 ♕f3+ **22.** ♖g1 ♕g4+ **23.** ♖f1 Given the situation on the other boards, it was clear that this game would decide the match, so of course White wanted to win.

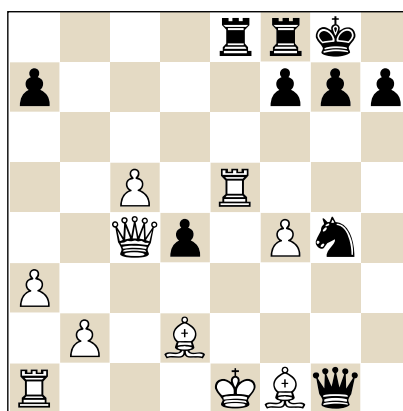
23... ♗h3+



24. ♖e1? After this over-cautious move Black gets an advantage. He would have had a hard time proving his

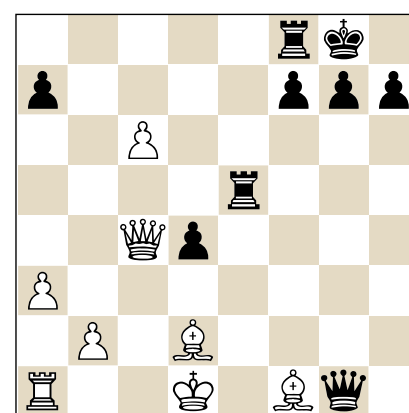
compensation after the correct **24.** ♖e2!. **24...** ♕xh2 By attacking the rook Black gains a vital tempo for ... ♕h1+, forcing White into passivity.

25. f4 ♕g1+ **26.** ♖f1 ♖g4 **27.** ♕c4 ♖ae8 Consistently bringing all the reserves into play.



28. c6 ♖xe5 **29.** fxe5 ♖xe5+ **30.** ♖d1

And yet things seem to go White's way, since his king is about to escape the danger area, leaving him with two strong bishops and an advanced pawn. But Almasi's fantastic idea changes the picture completely.



30... ♖f5!! **31.** c7 The point is that **31.** ♖c2 ♖c5!! **32.** ♕xc5 d3+ wins the queen. **31...** d3 **32.** ♕xd3 ♖xf1+ **33.** ♖c2 ♖xa1 0-1.

The other games ended in draws, which meant that Almasi's courage sealed a historic win against the reigning Olympiad champions.

In the events in which I acted as team captain, Zoltan was the most successful player. In Reykjavik he won the individual bronze medal and in Baku the silver medal. ■



A GRANDMASTER AMONG UNIVERSITIES.

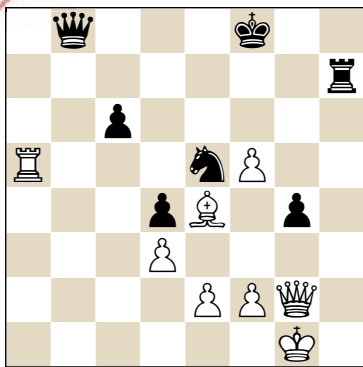
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CHESS TEAM

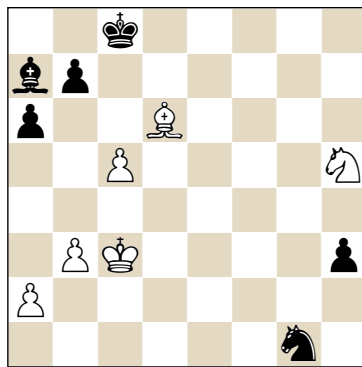
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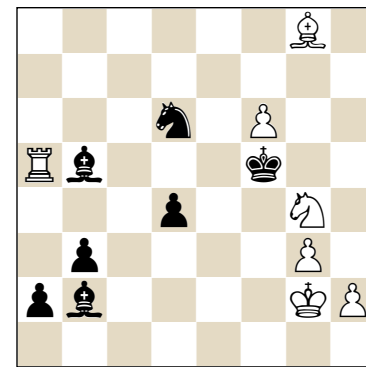
1. Siniauski-Antipov
Minsk 2017

43...♔b1+? 44.♔f1 is no good, but **43...♘f3+!** cuts off the bishop. White resigned in view of 44.exf3 ♔b1+ 45.♔f1 ♔h1+ or 44.♙xf3 gxf3 45.♔xf3 ♔b1+ with mate on h4.



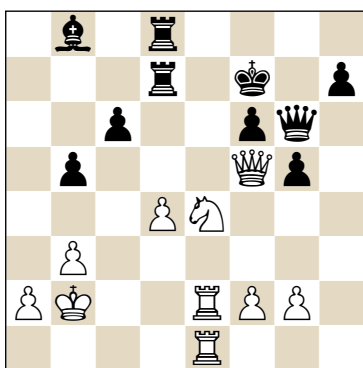
2. Gajewski-Ragger
Chartres 2017

39...♙xc5! 40.♙xc5 40.♙h2 ♘f3 41.♙f4 ♙f2 followed by 42...h2. **40...♘e2+** 40...h2 41.♘g3 ♘e2+ was another way. White resigned.



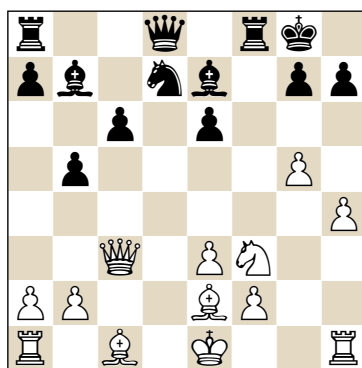
3. Dastan-Edouard
Minsk 2017

52.f7 ♘xf7 53.♙xf7! ♙e4 53... a1 ♔ 54.♔xb5+ ♙e4 55.♙g6 mate. **54.♔xb5 ♙d3 55.♔xb3+ ♙c3** 55...♙c2 56.♔xb2+. **56.♔a3** and Black resigned soon after.



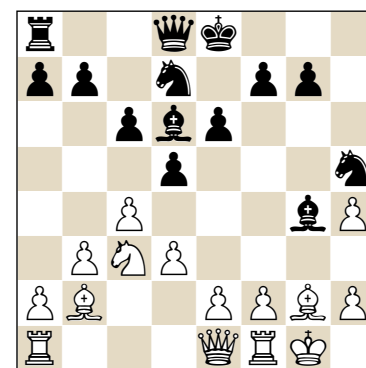
4. Ali Marandi-Gelashvili
St Louis 2017

35.♘xg5+! ♔xg5? 35...♙g8 only loses a pawn. **36.♔xh7+ ♙f8** If 36...♔g7 37.♔e7+ winning the queen. **37.♔e8+! ♔xe8 38.♔h8+ ♙f7 39.♔xe8+** Black resigned.



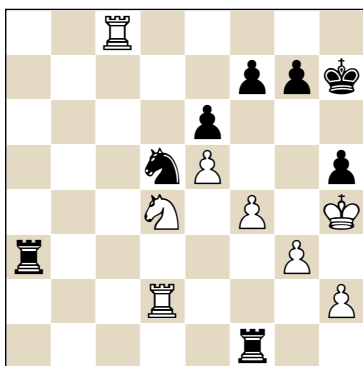
5. Akobian-Adhiban
Khanty-Mansiysk 2017

14...♔xf3! 15.♙xf3 ♔f8! The threat is 16...♙b4. **16.♙e2 b4 17.♔c4 17.♔d3 ♘e5 18.♔e4 ♙a6+** is a disaster. **17...♔xf3+! 18.♙xf3 ♘e5+ 19.♙g3 ♘xc4** and Black won.



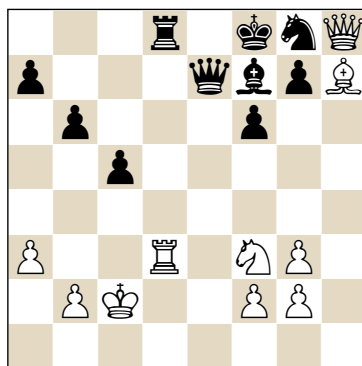
6. Gomez-Otero
Santa Clara 2017

12...♙f3!! Blocking the f-pawn. **13.♙c1 13.exf3 ♔xh4. 13...♔xh4 14.h3 ♘f4 15.♙xf3 15.exf3 ♔g5 16.♙xf4 ♔xf4** mating. **15...♔xh3** Mate on h2 follows, so White resigned.



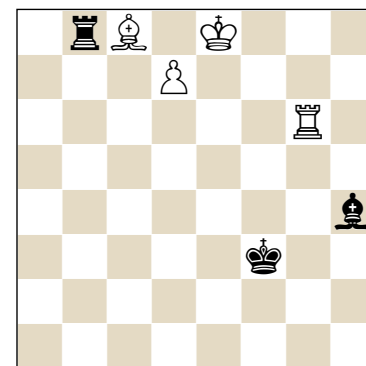
7. Brkic-Sedlak
Mali Losinj 2017

55...♘xf4! 56.gxf4 ♔xf4+ 57.♙g5 After 57.♙xh5 ♔h3+ 58.♙g5 ♔hh4! White is helpless against the double threat of 59...f6+ and 59...♔fg4 mate. **57...♔g4+ 58.♙xh5 ♔g1!** White resigned: 59.h4 g6 mate or 59.♙h4 g5+ 60.♙h5 ♔h3 mate.



8. Sanikidze-A.Sokolov
Chartres 2017

26.♘e5! fxe5 26...♔xd3? 27.♘g6+ or 26...♔xe5 27.♔xd8+. **27.♙xg8 ♙xg8 28.♔f3+ ♙e8 29.♔xg8+ ♙d7 30.♔d3+ ♙c7?** Better was 30...♙c8. **31.♔xd8 ♔xd8 32.♔xg7+ ♙c6 33.♔xe5** and White soon won.



9. Li Chao-Neiksans
Chartres 2017

98.♔g4! ♙f6 If 98...♙xg4, 99.d8 ♔ comes with check. **99.♔g7! ♔b4** Now 100.♔e7 ♙xe7 101.♙xe7 fails to 101...♔d4, but there is another way to secure promotion: **100.♔f7 ♔e4+ 101.♙f8 ♔f4 102.♔xf6! ♔xf6+ 103.♙e7** Black resigned.

Rameshbabu
Praggnanandhaa
hopes to write
history

Quicker than **12 years and 7** months?

Praggnanandhaa is the youngest IM in history and probably the biggest Indian sensation since Anand. 'Praggu' still has till March 9, 2018, if he wants to break Sergey Karjakin's record and, doing so, become the youngest GM ever. A profile of a prodigy by **V. SARAVANAN** and game notes by the young man himself.



Twelve-year-old Praggnanandhaa loves to sing and dance, is fun-loving and 'quite a naughty guy'!

When asked about Pragg-nanandhaa away from the board, his coach GM R. B. Ramesh smiles, 'He is quite a naughty guy! I can't really reveal to you his level of naughtiness. He is fun-loving, makes jokes, he even pokes fun at me, watches Tamil movies and cartoons, sings a lot and dances spontaneously!' And the 41-year-old coach gets up and does an impromptu imitation dance performance with the clumsiest of South-Indian folk dance steps, much to the delight of his students and family, who break into laughter and applause.

It's a vivid introduction to Rameshbabu Pragg-nanandhaa, the youngest International Master of the world, who was awarded the title at 10 years, 10 months and 19 days of age, but is a normal 12-year-old otherwise. When you talk to him, the most important observation is the lad's obliviousness about his achievements so far, and his potential. He is on a race to break Sergey Karjakin's record of becoming the youngest Grandmaster of the world (12 years and 7 months), but he is happy to chat about his love for food and beseeches his coach not to reveal too much about his escapades! He seems neither too elated with wins nor too upset with his losses, which explains his cheerfulness, even though we are chatting just after he has lost a game earlier that day.

Praggu learnt chess when he was barely two and a half years old, just by watching his elder sister, Vaishali, herself now a Woman International Master and a bright talent in India. He was trained initially by Velayudham, who runs the Bloom Chess Academy at Chennai, the home city of India's greatest chess player ever, Anand.

The chess culture of Chennai has helped Pragg-nanandhaa immensely. He started to play competitively at the

Open in Moscow, the Cannes Open and the KIIT Open in Bhubaneswar.

The most important contribution to Praggu's development started when he began working with Ramesh at the age of 9, rated about 1900. Starting from 2014, the partnership has resulted in a gain of 500 rating points and the IM title, which speaks volumes about their chemistry.

Ramesh finds his ward a complete talent, able to handle any kind of position, and a hard-working and self-motivated lad. 'He is mad about chess! I never need to direct him or his sister about their work on chess – they both work extremely hard by themselves without anyone goading them,' he says. He recognized the boy's talent from the very start, and was impressed with his self-confidence.

Praggu says tactics and calculation are his main attractions, naming his favourite players as Mikhail Tal and Garry Kasparov,

whose games he studied at the age of six. He has studied a lot of classics already, and has committed an immense number of instructive games to memory, which Ramesh feels is an important reason for his development. Only in the past six months have they turned their attention to openings, which has resulted in a drastic improvement in his play.



Praggu with his parents and his sister Vaishali, herself a Woman International Master.

age of four, making his big break by winning the National U-7 championship in 2012. He has risen fast and steadily through the run, winning the U-8 world title in 2013 and the U-10 world title in 2015. His first GM victim was R. R. Laxman, when he was only 10 years old.

In the early months of 2016, he made his IM norms at the Aeroflot

On his birthday recently (August 10), he briefly touched 2500 in the live ratings.

The Velammal educational institutions of Chennai have been a boon for dozens of chess players, GMs Adhiban and Sethuraman being their most famous alumni. Praggu has taken advantage of the liberal support from the school. He starts giggling when asked about the school and confesses he hardly attends classes. And although he didn't sit any exam for the whole previous school year, the school still let him go over to the next year.

Not just his achievements sit lightly on this young lad, but his whole life seems to be in comfortable order. He travels to all the tournaments with this mother and sister, who care for him and provide him with South-Indian food, which he is very fond of. They tease him for his love of rice with curd (yoghurt), an important part of lunch and dinner for Tamils. Praggu's father Ramesh Babu is a bank employee, and his mother Nagalakshmi is a homemaker. Their support seems to be crucial for his achievements, and luckily the family got a shot in the arm just when they found it difficult to finance his travel and training. When he became the youngest IM of the world, Ramco Systems, a software company based in Chennai, came forward to sponsor him. It is no coincidence that Venketrappa Raja, the founder of the company, is also the President of the All India Chess Federation, the governing body of the game in the country.

When we asked Praggu to annotate some of his recent games, he chose his encounters at the Match of the Millennials in St. Louis with Awonder Liang, the 14-year-old American prodigy who is currently the youngest GM in the world (he stopped the clock on May 29 of this year, at the age of 14 years, one month and 20 days).



NOTES BY

Praggnanandhaa**Praggnanandhaa****Awonder Liang**

St. Louis 2017 (1)

Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

Awonder Liang became a GM a few months ago, so I was eager to play against him here.

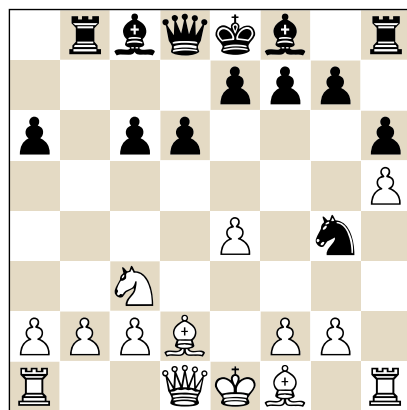
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.h4!?

I prepared this line for this game.

6...♗c6 7.h5 h6 8.♙e3 ♗g4 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♙d2

I had been following Yu Yangyi-Lu Shanglei, 2017, up to this point.

10...♖b8



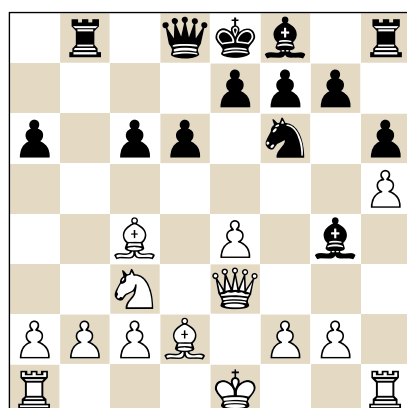
A new move, but as per my preparation.

11.♙c4 ♗f6

If 11...♖xb2 then 12.♙b3, and the rook will soon be trapped.

12.♗f3 Another idea was 12.♙b3 e5 13.♗e2 ♙e7 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.f3, intending a g4-g5 attack.

12...♙g4 13.♗e3



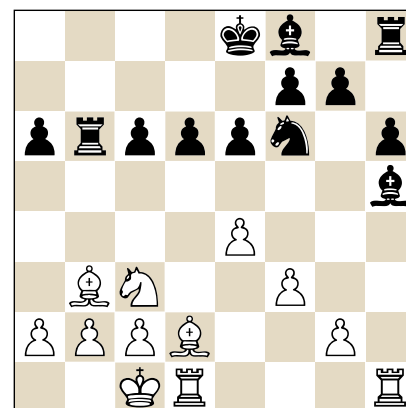
13...e6 No good was 13...d5?! 14.exd5 cxd5 15.♙b3, and now

15...♖xb3? (15...♗d6, with the idea of pushing ...e5, 16.♗e2! e5 17.♙c3, with strong pressure against the central pawns, for example 17...♗d7 18.0-0-0 or 17...♗e4 18.0-0-0 ♗xc3 19.♗xc3! ♙xe2 20.♖xd5, and White wins; 15...d4 would lose to 16.♙a4+) 16.axb3 d4 17.♗d3! dxc3 18.♗xd8+ ♙xd8 19.♙xc3, and White's pawns and active pieces give White the advantage.

14.♙b3 ♗b6?!

I believe that after 14...♙xh5 15.f3 ♙e7 16.g4 ♙g6 17.0-0-0 0-0 18.♗e2 White has good chances of an attack on the kingside.

15.♗xb6 ♖xb6 16.f3 ♙xh5 17.0-0-0



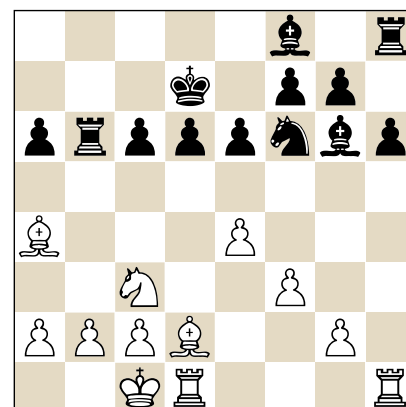
I felt White was much better here, since Black has too many weak pawns and his pieces are not well coordinated.

17...♙g6 18.♙a4!

White is threatening to play ♙e3 the next move, winning back the pawn with a clear advantage.

18...♙d7

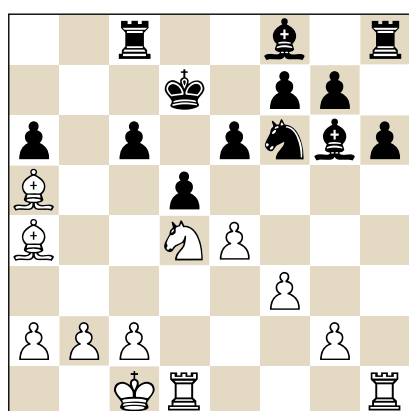
Black loses after 18...♗d7 19.♙f4 e5 20.♙e3 ♗c5 21.♙xc5 dxc5 22.♗d5.



19.e5?! Also interesting was 19.♗e2!, with the idea of 19...d5 20.♙a5 ♖b8 21.♗d4 ♖c8, and now:



At the Match of the Millennials, Pragganandhaa, the youngest IM in the world, confidently prevailed over Awonder Liang, the youngest GM in the world.



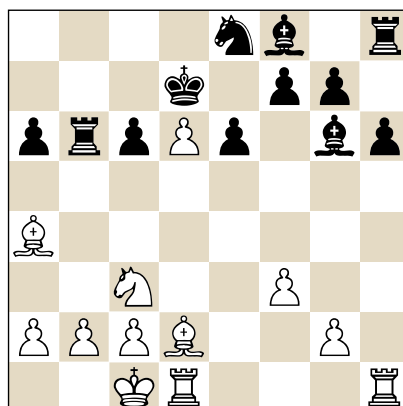
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

- 22. ♖h1. The point is that Black cannot meet c4 with ... ♗d6 now in view of e5, and White wins a piece: 22... ♗c5 (22... ♗e7 23.c4!) 23.c4!, and the black king is exposed.
- 22.c4 directly allows 22... ♗d6!

23.cxd5 exd5 24. ♖b1 dxe4 25. ♖a1! exf3 26.gxf3 h5 27. ♖c1, a very interesting computer line!

19... ♗e8 Black should have sacrificed the exchange with 19... dxe5!, when after 20. ♗e3+ ♖c7 21. ♗xb6+ ♖xb6 he would have had decent compensation.

20.exd6



20... ♗xd6?! He should have played 20... ♗xd6 21. ♗e4 ♗xe4 22.fxe4 ♗e7 23. ♗a5 ♖c7! 24. ♗xb6+ ♖xb6, although White should be clearly better due to the many open files available to his rooks.

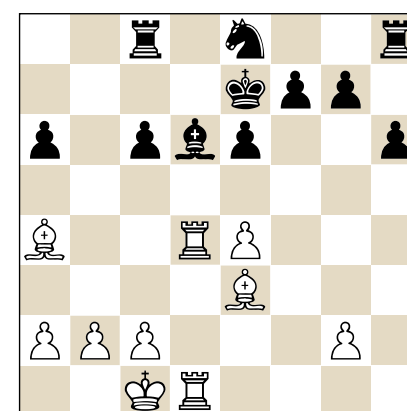
21. ♗e3 ♖b8 22. ♖d4

22. ♖h4! is much better than what I did in the game: 22... ♖c8 23. ♖b4!.

22... ♖c8 White is clearly better after 22... ♖c7 23. ♖c4 c5 24. ♗xc5 ♗xc5 25. ♖xc5+ ♖b7 26. ♖h4.

And after 22... e5?! 23. ♖c4! ♖b5 24. ♖d1 White would be winning.

23. ♖hd1 ♖e7 24. ♗e4 ♗xe4 25.fxe4!



Black's pieces are completely tied up in defence.

25... ♗e5 26. ♖d7+ ♖f6

The king cannot go back: 26... ♖f8? 27. ♗c5+ ♖g8 28. ♖d8 ♖xd8 29. ♖xd8 ♖h7 30. ♗xc6 ♗f6 31. ♖xh8+ ♖xh8



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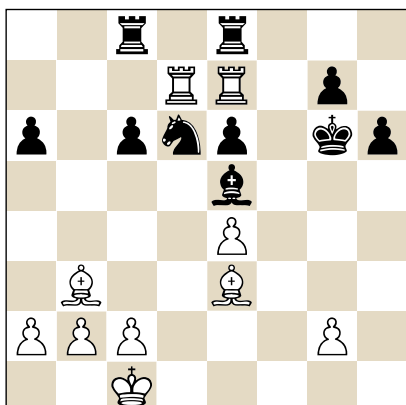
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32.b4, and the white queenside pawns carry the day.

27. ♖f1+ ♔g6 28. ♖xf7 ♜d6 29. ♖fe7 ♖he8 30. ♙b3!

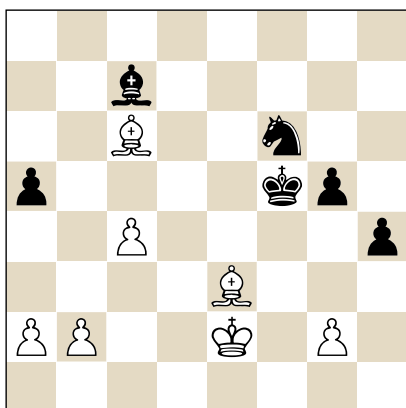


Changing the target.

30... ♜xe4 31. ♙xe6

31.c3! would probably have been better, since White could have played against the king.

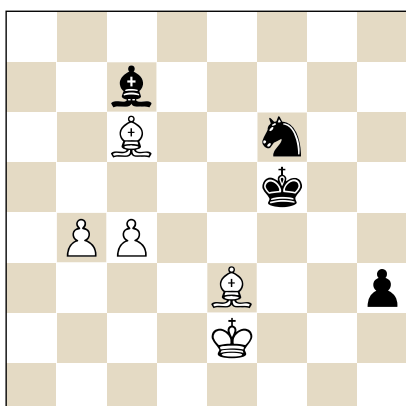
31... ♖xe7 32. ♖xe7 ♖c7! 33. ♖xc7 ♙xc7 34. ♙c8 a5 35. ♙b7+- ♔f5 36. ♙xc6 h5 37. c4 ♜f6 38. ♙d2 g5 39. ♙e2 h4



40.a3?! Instead, 40. ♙b7! g4 41. ♙c8+ would be winning.

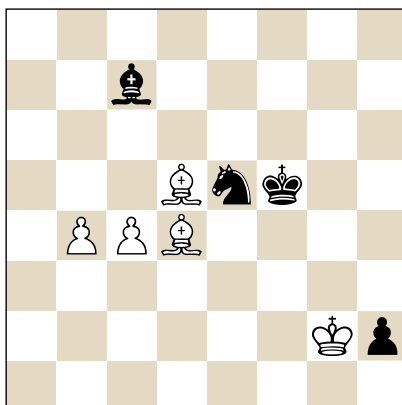
40... g4 41.b4 Here 41. ♙b7?! runs into 41...a4!, and the bishop comes to e5.

41...axb4 42.axb4 h3 43.gxh3 gxh3



44. ♙f3?? We both were in time-trouble. 44.b5! h2 45. ♙g2 was simply winning.

44...h2 45. ♙g2 ♜g4! I had seen this, but after **46. ♙d4 ♜e5 47. ♙d5**



I had missed **47... ♜d3** which loses a pawn by force. **48.b5 ♜f4+ 49. ♙h1 ♜xd5 50.cxd5 ♙e4 51. ♙a7 ♙xd5 52.b6 ♙c6 53.bxc7 ♙xc7 54. ♙b8+ ♙xb8 55. ♙xh2**

Draw.

I had outplayed him throughout the game, but in time-trouble I blundered and had to settle for a draw. Still, I am happy about the overall quality of my play in this game.



Praggu with his great example Vishy Anand.



NOTES BY

Praggnanandhaa

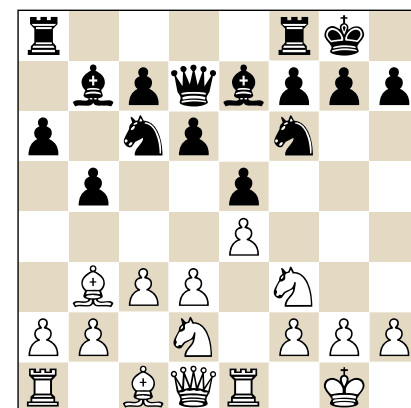
Awonder Liang

Praggnanandhaa

St. Louis 2017 (3)

Ruy Lopez, Closed Variation

1.e4 e5 2. ♜f3 ♜c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 ♜f6 5.0-0 b5 6. ♙b3 ♙b7 7.d3 ♙e7 8. ♖e1 0-0 9. ♜bd2 d6 10.c3 ♙d7



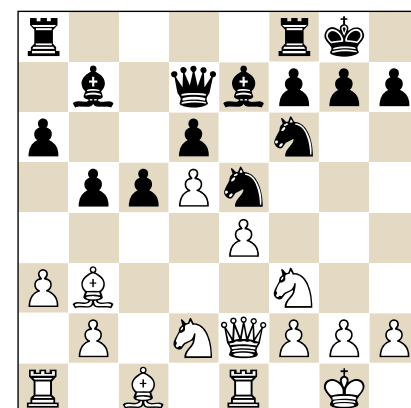
I had seen this idea in the game Caruana-Carlsen from the 2015 Sinquefeld Cup.

11.d4 Another option is 11. ♜f1!?, to take the knight to g3.

11...exd4 12.cxd4 ♜b4 13. ♙e2 c5 14.a3 ♜c6

My original idea here was to play 14...c4?, but after 15.axb4 cxb3 16.d5! my pieces are very badly placed and I will be a pawn down.

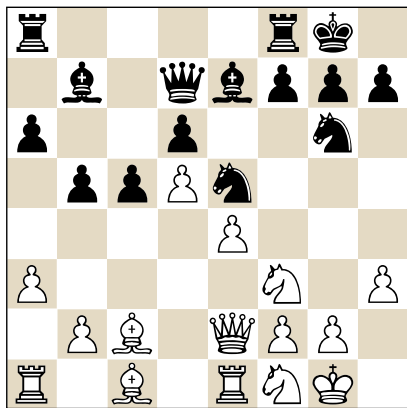
15.d5 ♜e5



16. ♙c2 I thought that after 16. ♜xe5 dxe5 the position should be equal, since I can put a bishop or knight on the d6-square.

16... ♜g6 17. ♜f1 ♜g4

The idea is to play ...♙f6 and ...♘4e5.
18.h3 ♘4e5



19.♘3h2

Or 19.♘xe5 ♘xe5 20.f4 ♘g6 21.♙e3 (21.♘g3?! ♙h4) 21...♙h4 22.♚ed1 f5! 23.exf5 ♘e7, with an unclear position.

19...♙f6 20.♘e3 ♙g5

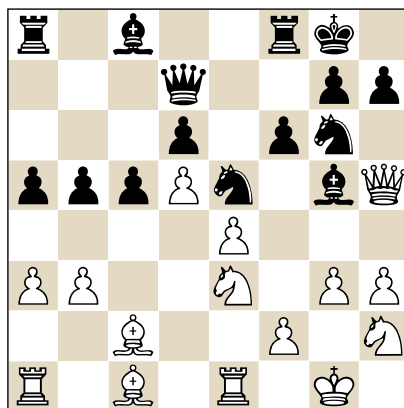
Objectively speaking, 20...a5 may be better, but I wanted to exploit the drawback of 20.♘e3.

21.b3 a5 I want to improve my

bishop on b7 with this move, followed by ...♙a6 and ...b4.

22.♚h5 f6 23.g3 ♙c8!?

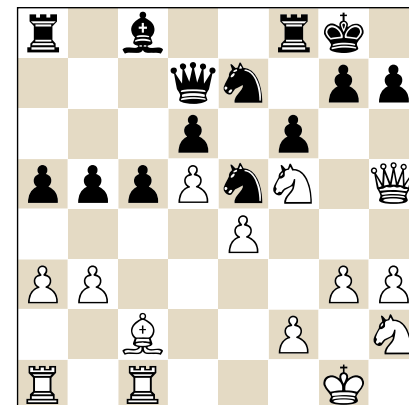
A good intermediate move, aimed at White's kingside.



24.♘f5

The situation would be unclear if White were to go for the piece: 24.f4 ♙xf4 25.gxf4 ♘xf4 26.♚h4 (26.♚f5 ♘xh3+ 27.♚h1 ♚f7 is good for Black) 26...g5 27.♚g3 ♘h5 28.♚f2 ♚xh3.

24...♙xc1 25.♚exc1!? ♘e7

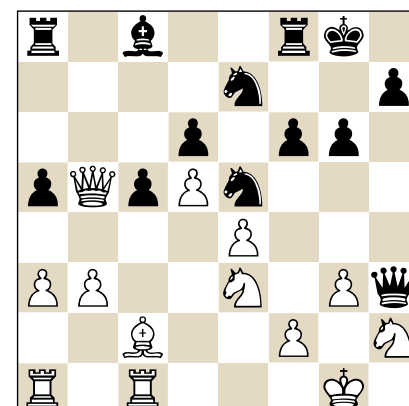


26.♘e3?!

26.♘xe7+ ♚xe7 27.f4 ♘d7 should be equal, but I thought Black would have some counterplay on the queenside. Now Black takes over.

26...g6 27.♚e2 ♚xh3 28.♚xb5?

And after this, Black is winning.



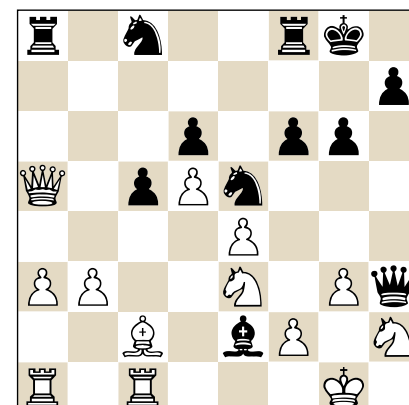
28...♙a6! 29.♚b6

White is also lost after 29.♚a4 ♚fb8 30.b4 axb4 31.axb4 ♙e2.

29...♘c8 30.♚xa5

The queen will be lost after 30.♚c7 ♚a7 31.♚b8 ♘d7.

30...♙e2



White loses the queen or will be mated, so he resigned. ■

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT CHESS
ENHANCES MEMORY SKILLS IN CHILDREN



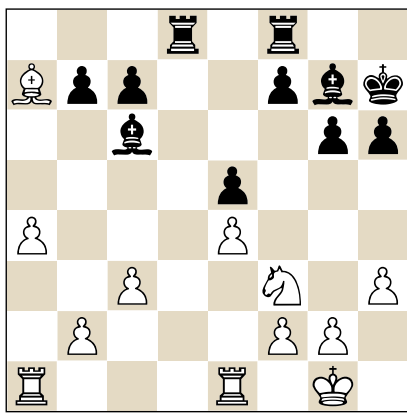


Chess Pattern Recognition

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

The odd rook move

The rule says that rooks have to be moved to (half-)open files. Or don't they?



Hou Yifan-Rapport

Geneva 2017

position after 20. a7

20...g8!!? Hou had just snatched the pawn on a7, and this is Rapport's amazingly restrained retort! Obviously, 20...b6 would be adequately met by 21.a5, while 20...a8 fails to win back the pawn at once after 21.c5. Certainly, Black does have compensation for the pawn (active pieces, bishop pair) and with the rook gone from f8, ...a8 is a threat again. But why not choose one of the more natural options, 20...fe8 or 20...d3? What more could be behind the text-move? **21.a5 f5** The inevitable break to let the bishop pair spring to life. **22.exf5** What else? **22...gxf5** Now that the g-file has been opened, it is obvious that the rook is well placed on g8. **23.fed1?** A grave error. It seems Hou attached too much value to the rook's activity and therefore avoided 23.fxe5 fxe5 24.fxe5 fxe5 25.f1 f1 d2, which may look terribly dangerous, but White survives. For instance, 26.f7+ g8 27.f2. **23...a8** Even

stronger was 23...f1+ 24.f1 f6 first. But after **24.f3 f4 25.f2 f6** Black's pressure soon provoked a second mistake, after which Rapport took the game. **26.f1 g7 27.c4 ag8 28.f1?** 28.a6 f6 29.f6 f6 29...f3 30.a7 30.f1. **28...f6 29.f6 f3 30.f3 e4 31.f3 e5 32.f3 c6 33.f4 fxe2+ 34.f1 g1 f8 35.f1 g8 36.f1 h4 37.f1 h3 38.f1 h2 39.f1 h4 40.f1 d1 41.f1 g7 42.f1 e3 43.f1 xc4 44.f1 e5 45.f1 gg4 46.f1 d6 h5 0-1.**

20...g8 might not have been the best move in the position, but at least it showed quite inventive anticipation by Rapport. Here is another puzzling ...g8.

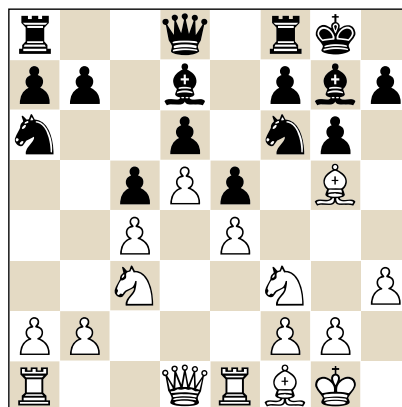
Zoltan Gyimesi

Luke McShane

Germany 2006

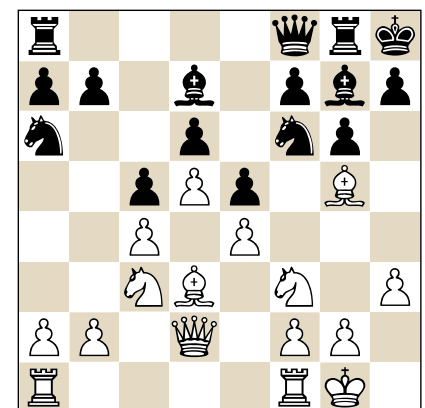
King's Indian Defence

1.d4 f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.f2 e5 7.0-0 a6 8.f1 c6 9.f1 g4 10.d5 c5 11.h3 d7 12.g5



12...h8 13.f2 d2 g8 'Yeah, right, that makes sense' might be your first ironic thought, although I guess you will be on the alert after the first example. **14.f3** It appears that Black's mysterious manoeuvre was not a one-off inspiration in this position and that both play-

ers came prepared. One earlier game had seen 14.a3 f8 15.f2 h2 e8 16.f3 f5 (Pinter-McShane, Saint-Vincent 2005). Gyimesi anticipated on the upcoming queen manoeuvre. **14...f8** Black uses the vacated square to unpin the f6-knight, so he can remove it from the f-file and subsequently play ...f7-f5. **15.f1**



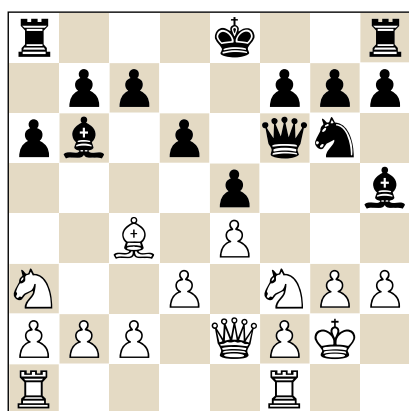
15...h6 15...e8 16.f2 h4! was Gyimesi-Arakhania, Gibraltar 2006, when White's plan succeeded after 16...f6 17.f3 e7 18.f4. **16.f3** h7 17.f2 Now 17.f4 does not make sense in view of 17...e7. **17...f5 18.exf5** Not forced here, and perhaps not the best move, but after a continuation like 18.f3 f4 19.f2 h5 the rook will soon come in handy on the g-file too, supporting further advances on the kingside with ...g5-g4; 18.f4 seems the logical follow-up of White's preceding play, creating an 'explosive pawn block' (see the Pattern column in New In Chess 2017/2), but White must have feared 18...exf4 19.fxf4 g5. **18...gxf5** Now Black is OK, and McShane, just like Rapport, had fully justified his initially mysterious ...g8. The game was eventually drawn. (1/2-1/2, 44)

Surely this must be the more easier ...g8 to decide on, since in this closed position Black is forced to manoeuvre and obtain some mobility for his

pieces. Rapport, on the other hand, had various reasonable and, above all, more natural alternatives at hand, which makes his choice an even more admirable one.

In his writings, Nimzowitsch connected these mysterious rook moves – occupying a closed file – with the idea of prophylaxis, preventing a break by one's opponent. As Dvoretsky wrote, such prophylactic moves leave a strong aesthetic impression, due to their unusual and improbable character. McShane's concept, though not prophylactic, is of course pleasing as well.

Next we see a rook move of another kind, equally charming and immediately decisive.

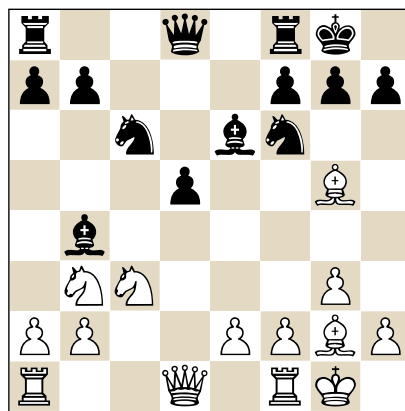


Gomes-Neto
Rio de Janeiro 1942
position after 14.g2

14...♖g8! If you have read this column diligently from the beginning, this is the move you will have considered first. In other circumstances you might have needed some more time to discover the idea. With one knight stranded on a3 and the other firmly pinned, White is helpless against the threat of 15...♘h4+ 16.gxh4 g5. As Dvoretsky notes, 15...♘h4+ 16.gxh4 ♖g8 boils down to the same thing. **15.c3** Once having spotted the idea of ...♖g8, I guess the only difficulty is to see that 15.♘b1 ♘h4+ 16.gxh4 g5 17.♘bd2 can be adequately met by 17...g4!. **15...♘h4+ 16.gxh4 g5 17.♖g1 ♕xf3+ 18.♗xf3 gxh4+** And game over. Actually this is one of Dvoretsky's many exercises.

'Such prophylactic moves leave a strong aesthetic impression, due to their unusual and improbable character.'

In the following example, White optimizes a threat in a hidden manner.



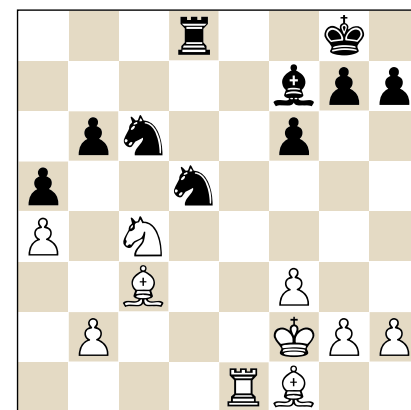
Ivkov-Parma
Rovinj/Zagreb 1970
position after 11...0-0

Here you can play on automatic pilot – rook to the half-open file, while preserving your pawn structure – with 12.♖c1 or calculate whether your edge is worth playing for after 12.♕xf6 ♗xf6 13.♘xd5 ♕xd5 14.♗xd5 ♗xb2 15.♗c4 a5. Both moves have been seen in practice. Ivkov found something else.

12.♖b1!? I don't know what Parma thought upon seeing this move, but as Black, one of the first ideas popping up in your head must be: 'Now, of course, I'm not going to capture on c3, so ♖b1 will have been a waste of time.' Yet, if you had calculated 12.♕xf6 before, you might now have noticed another hidden asset of the funny rook move: the b2-pawn is protected, similar to how Rapport's ...♖g8 also renewed the threat of ...♖a8. Parma's next natural move shows that he didn't see this second idea. **12...♖e8? 13.♕xf6! ♗xf6 14.♘xd5 ♕xd5 15.♗xd5** With the capture on b2 being impossible, Black took the pawn with **15...♖xe2** to equalise material, but after **16.♗c4** he found it hard to hold on to his loose pieces and

lost material anyway. **16...♗e7 17.a3 ♘a5 18.♗xb4 ♗xb4 19.axb4 ♘xb3 20.♖fd1 ♘d2 21.♕xb7** (and 1-0 in 58) Five years later Parma duly obliged with 12...♕xc3 13.bxc3 and made a draw after 13...h6 (versus Vukic).

Let's finish with an impressive endgame manoeuvre on this theme from the World Champion.



Carlsen-Adams
Khanty-Mansiysk 2007
position after 32...♘d5

33.♖b1! An unbelievable move at first sight, since there is no advance of the b-pawn in sight. True, 33.♕d2 does not give the bishop much scope, while 33.♖d1 might well be met by 33...♘xc3 34.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 35.bxc3 ♕xc4. The text-move effectively rules out the capture on c3, of course, but how was Magnus planning to continue? **33...♗f8** If 33...♕g6 then 34.♖d1, and now, after 34...♘xc3 35.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 36.bxc3, Black no longer has ...♕xc4! **34.♕e1!** Using the vacated square to preserve the bishop pair. Moreover, after **34...♗e7 35.♗g1!** pawn b6 was in trouble! This was the regrouping White had intended all along! **35...♘b8 36.♕f2 ♘d7 37.♖e1+ ♗f8 38.♖d1 ♗e7 39.♖e1+ ♗f8 40.♘d6**, and eventually 17-year-old Magnus Carlsen pressed home his advantage after **40...♘e5 41.♘xf7 ♗xf7 42.♖d1** (1-0, 77)

So there may be various legitimate purposes to move your rook to a closed file behind your own pawn. To find and dare to play these moves, you 'just' need to do a little bit of scuba diving into the position! ■

The Return of Teimour Radjabov

Undisputed win in Geneva Grand Prix

NOTES BY

Teimour Radjabov

Teimour Radjabov

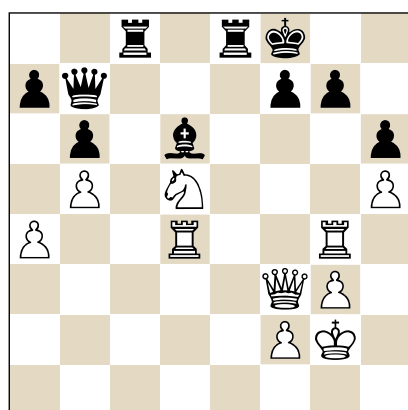
Peter Svidler

Geneva 2017 (7)

English Opening

I had the possibility to comment three games this time, my three wins in Geneva. The game against Eljanov was not something I am proud of, since I made my ♖xg7 move when I was down to one second. It gave me a lot of courage and joy after the game, but believe me, not during ☺.

(Ed. – This is the position he is referring to:





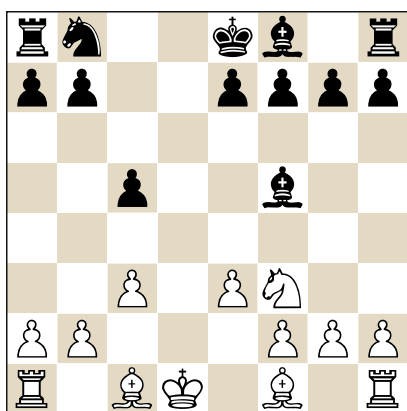
Teimour Radjabov: 'One of the smoothest games I have played since 2011/2012, my "in-the-zone period", when I was winning almost every slightly better position.'

he probably thought that this was the most direct (and correct) way to equalize. Maybe it is...

7. ♖xd1

Now Black should probably go for ...♗c6 and ...♕d7 for a position that is slightly less comfortable, but probably perfectly tenable.

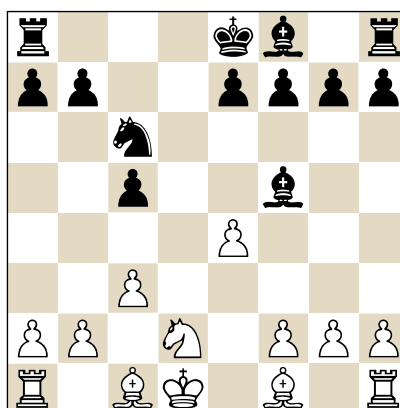
7... ♕f5!?



8. ♘d2!

An important move. White transfers the knight to the queenside to support the e4-pawn push. Peter was not too happy about his position here.

8... ♗c6 9. e4



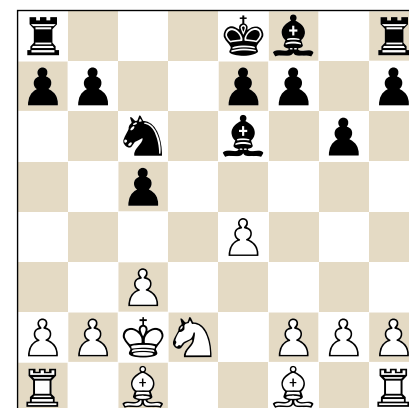
9... ♕e6? Much better was 9... ♕d7. On d7 the bishop protects the c6-knight, making ♕b5 ideas less threatening. The pawn on e7 will move to e6 and the f8-bishop is freed in a natural way.

After 9... ♕e6, Black has to develop with ...g6, which is very awkward. Peter told me that he had underestimated 10. ♖c2, as he was counting on ♕c4, ♕b5 or other moves.

10. ♖c2! Simple and strong. All my moves are natural, whereas Black will probably have to find only moves now to prevent himself from ending up in a very awkward set-up. The computer

even suggests 10...f6 here, but it does not look nice for Black already.

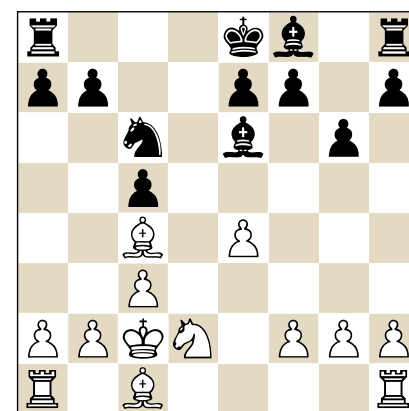
10...g6 While Peter was thinking, I wasn't sure whether I should go for plans with f4 and ♘f3, or for ♕c4, which frees Black's hands somewhat. My considerations were stopped by the simple realisation: you are on a +2 score 😊.



11. ♕c4 This is possible, but may cost White his advantage.

11.f4!?, with the idea of playing ♘f3 and gradually improving my position, looked interesting, but I did not see how to make progress with such a set-up later on (maybe something like g4-h4-g5), so I decided to play more calmly.

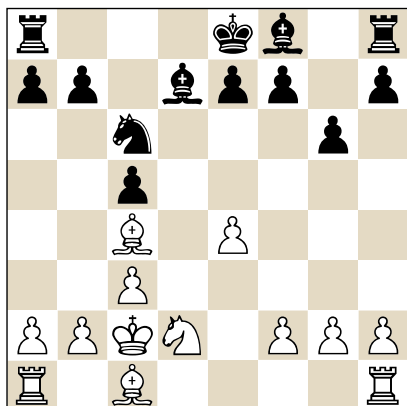
Objectively, 11. ♘f3!? might have been better, when, after 11... ♕g7 12. ♕e3 b6 13. ♕b5 ♖c8 14. ♖hd1 0-0 15. ♕f4, the position is very unpleasant for Black. White goes for h4, ♕a6, and at some point takes the d-file.



11... ♕d7?! This move may not be all that bad in itself, but it makes it harder to play the black position.

Also unpleasant for Black is 11... ♕xc4?! 12. ♘xc4 b5 13. ♘e3 ♕g7 14. a4 b4 15. ♘c4 0-0 16. ♕f4 f5

17.♖ae1, when White is clearly better. My main over-the-board concern was 11...♙h6, when after 12.♙xe6 fxe6 13.a4 b6 14.♘c4 ♙xc1 15.♖hxc1, I liked the structure, but did not see how to exploit Black's weaknesses. Even though White can play this position for ages, I still regretted my ♙c4 decision here. But then Black played 11...♙d7.



12.♘b3! I spent a lot of time considering other moves (and calculating Black's possible reply 12...♙e5).

After 12.f4 ♙a5!, followed by castling long, Black is fine.

And after 12.a4?! ♙h6 Black will exchange far too many pieces.

At first I liked 12.♘f3 ♙a5 13.♙e2, but after 13...♙c6 14.♘d2 e6 I could not find a way to drive back the nasty knight on a5. And there isn't one, in fact.

Geneva 2017

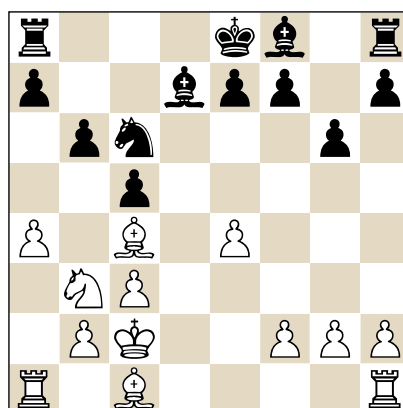
		PTS	TPR	GP-PTS
1	Radjabov	2724	6	2872 170
2	Grischuk	2761	5½	2825 125
3	Nepomniachtchi	2742	5½	2812 125
4	Harikrishna	2737	5	2779 60
5	Mamedyarov	2800	5	2775 60
6	Li Chao	2735	5	2783 60
7	Svidler	2749	5	2765 60
8	Riazantsev	2654	5	2751 60
9	Adams	2736	5	2749 60
10	Giri	2775	5	2752 60
11	Gelfand	2728	4½	2735 11
12	Aronian	2809	4½	2730 11
13	Jakovenko	2703	4½	2741 11
14	Eljanov	2739	4½	2721 11
15	Inarkiev	2707	4	2671 4
16	Rapport	2694	2½	2540 2.5
17	Hou Yifan	2666	2½	2549 2.5
18	Salem	2638	2	2508 1
18 players, 9 rounds				

And finally, 12.♖d1 looked interesting. After 12...♙a5 13.♙f1 e6 14.♖e1 White is better. But can I make real progress? I'm not sure.

12...b6

As said, the main alternative was 12...♙e5. I decided on my 12th move after finding 13.♙d5! ♙a4 14.♙b1! (14.♙xb7 ♖b8 15.♙d5 e6 16.♙f4 ♙d6 17.♙xe5 ♙xe5 18.♙c4 ♙e7, after which I was not sure how to proceed) 14...c4 15.♙xb7 (15.♙a5 is also strong) 15...♖b8 16.♘c5, and White is far better.

13.a4?! 'Compy' may be right that 13.♙f4! was the move to play, but I had only considered the move Black now played.

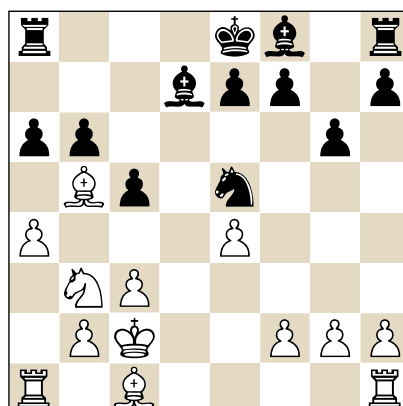


13...♙e5? This is a huge mistake, since Black now ends up in a practically losing position.

I had completely missed 13...f5! 14.a5 (14.♖e1 0-0-0 is only slightly better for White) 14...♙e5 15.♙d5 ♖d8 16.axb6 axb6 17.♖d1 ♙b5 18.♙f4 ♙g7, and Black should hold.

14.♙b5 a6

Both 14...0-0-0 15.♙f4 ♙g7 16.♙a6+ ♙c7 17.♘d2 and 14...♙g7 15.♙f4 are excellent for White.

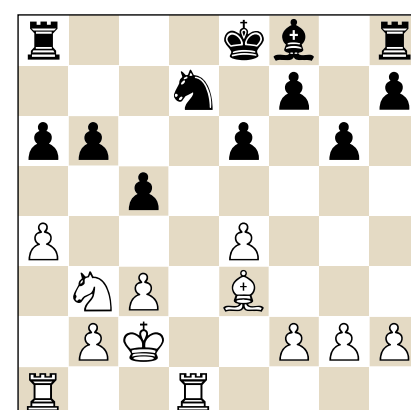


15.♙xd7+

Not the best, because 15.♙e2!! was stronger, but still OK. I think my choice was a much easier one in a practical game.

15...♙xd7 16.♙e3 e6 17.♖hd1

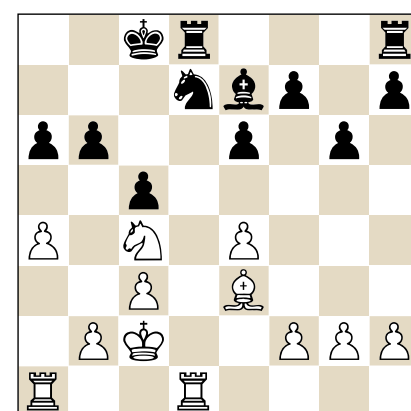
All White's moves are natural, whereas Black has to keep thinking and remain aware of all his weaknesses: ...b6, ...c5, the dark squares, the knight's penetration via the d2-c4 route, and the fact that he is a few tempi behind in development.



17...0-0-0 18.♘d2

I had seen the idea 18.a5 b5 19.c4, but why play it? Black's position is crumbling and White is winning.

18...♙e7 19.♘c4



Peter told me after the game that he was ready to resign here. True, Black's position is hopeless. His only chance is White making a serious mistake.

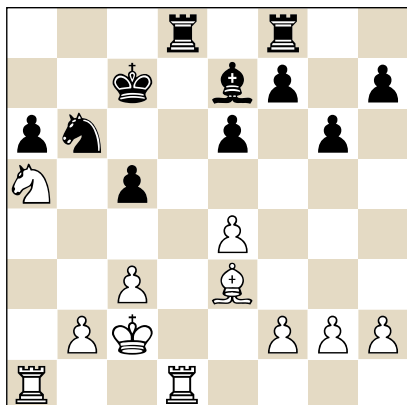
19...♙b7 20.a5

I liked 20.♙f4, but 20.a5 looked more straightforward.

20...♖hf8

White is winning after 20...b5 21.♘d6+ ♙xd6 22.♖xd6 ♘e5 23.♖b6+ ♙a7 24.♙xc5 (the computer's sadistic 24.b3 is unnecessary).

21. axb6 ♖xb6 22. ♔a5+ ♕c7



Yes, I am winning. Yes, there are plenty of ways to do so, but being on +2 and seeing a chance to add another, possibly decisive, win makes you a bit shaky. I started calculating long lines, but then pulled myself together and decided to play it classically.

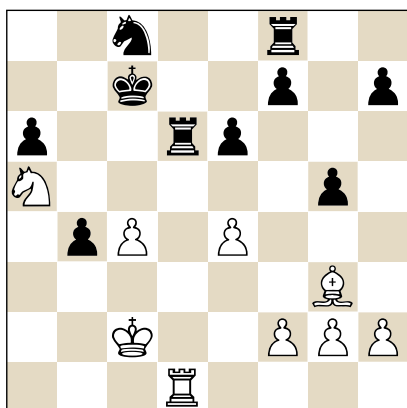
23. ♕f4+

23. ♖b3 ♔xd1 24. ♕xd1 ♖c4 is almost winning, but not too clear.

And after 23. ♔xd8 ♔xd8 24. ♖b3 ♖c4 I still have to give up this e3-bishop and double my pawns. Why?!

23... ♕d6 24. ♕h6

The alternative was 24. ♔xd6 ♔xd6 25. ♔d1, and here I stumbled on an interesting line: 25... ♖c8! 26. b4 cxb4 27. c4 g5 28. ♕g3.

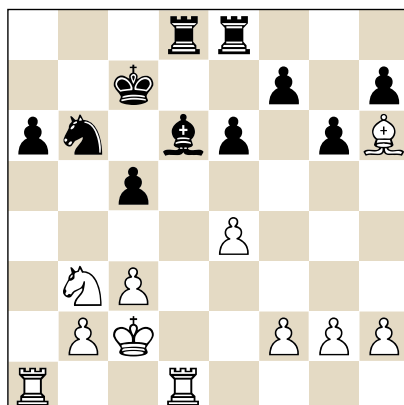


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And here my intuition proved to be right, so instead of going for this, which seemed close to winning, I decided to play positionally (otherwise I might have spent all my time on one move, as against Eljanov after ♔xg7, and ended up in zeitnot again. Thanks, but no thanks). Here Black has 28... e5!! 29. ♕xe5 f6 30. ♕g3 f5,

when White is still much better, but will find it hard to convert his advantage.

24... ♔fe8 25. ♖b3



I was very happy with this decision. Black is getting into time-trouble, my moves are easy, the position is close to winning, the bishop will always come back to e3, and protecting a6 and c5 is an extremely hard task for Black.

25... ♔a8 26. ♕e3 ♖d7

'Compy' suggests 27. ♖a5 or 27. ♖d2, but I think that, practically speaking, 27. ♔a5 is far simpler.

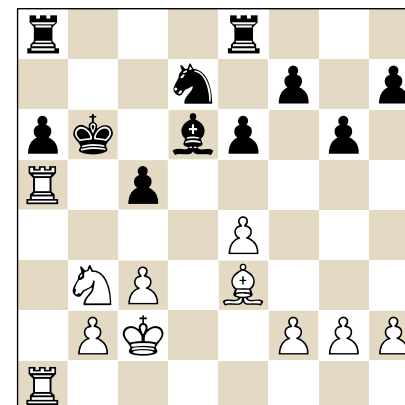
27. ♔a5 ♕c6 28. ♔da1

FIDE Grand Prix 2017 standings

	Sharjah	Moscow	Geneva	TOTAL
1 Mamedyarov	140	140	60	340
2 Grischuk	140	71	125	336
3 Radjabov		71	170	241
3 Ding Liren	70	170		240
5 Vachier-Lagrave	140	71		211
6 Nepomniachtchi	70	3	125	198
7 Nakamura	70	71		141
8 Adams	70	3	60	133
9 Svidler		71	60	131
Giri		71	60	131
11 Li Chao	25		60	85
12 Jakovenko	70		11	81
Hou Yifan	7	71	2.5	81
14 Harikrishna		20	60	80
15 Riazantsev	1		60	61
16 Eljanov	25		11	36
17 Vallejo	25	7		32
18 Gelfand		20	11	31
19 Rapport	25		2.5	28
20 Tomashevsky	3	20		23
21 Aronian	7		11	18
22 Hammer	3	7		10
23 Salem	3	3	1	7
23 Inarkiev		1	4	5
1 Leg to go (Palma de Mallorca)				

And here the computer suggests 28... f5, giving up the a6-pawn and trying to defend that position. It's true that this was Black's best choice, but his position was hopeless anyway.

28... ♕b6



29. ♔5a4!

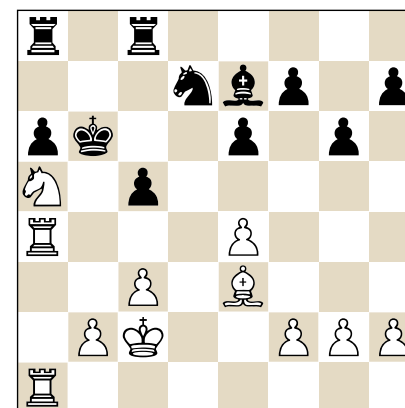
A nice move. I also considered withdrawing the rook to a2 or a3, or just playing g3 or h3, but after seeing the ♖a5-♔b4+ idea I understood that the rook would be far better placed on a4.

29... ♔ec8

Or 29... ♕b7 30. ♖a5+ ♕c8 31. ♖c4 (31. h3 – 'Compy' ☺) 31... ♕c7 32. ♔xa6, winning.

30. ♖a5 ♕e7??

This gives up the game, but the slow death after giving up the a6-pawn was not much of an option either.



31. ♔b4+

And Black resigned in view of 31... ♕c7 32. ♔b7+ ♕d8 33. ♔d1 ♔c7 34. ♖c6+ ♕c8 35. ♔xc7 ♕xc7 36. ♖xe7, followed by ♕f4+, protecting the knight.

This was a very important victory for me. I became the sole leader and in the end my win proved decisive for overall victory. ■



Hans Ree

Closing time

Last year, the Austrian chess historian Michael Ehn published a book about the Viennese chess cafés of the past. The great days of the European chess cafés are over, but there are still some spots of resistance where confirmed chess addicts can find solace.

A few years ago, Tea Lanchava, one of the best women chess players of the Netherlands, gave a lecture for a Dutch chess club in which she told her audience about her surprise when, after moving from Georgia to the Netherlands in 1995, she found that Dutch chess clubs opened only one day a week, in the evening. How could one become good if one could only train once a week?

Apparently, the Dutch chess world in which I had spent my life had been experienced by Lanchava as a chess desert. She herself had become good in Georgia at a young age. She had won the world championships for U-14 and U-16 girls and, as she said during her lecture, at the age of 13 she earned the same income as her teachers at school.

And what had I done as a youngster that could compete with the serious education of the Soviet school? At age 13, I had started attending a chess club once a week, and five years after that I also started frequenting a chess café on the Leidseplein square in the centre of Amsterdam. Not every day, but often. I did not train, because there was no trainer, and anyway, the idea would not have appealed to me. The word training suggests a determination to reach a goal, whereas I

was just drifting along, waiting to see what opportunity would present itself. In an era of full employment, thinking about a job could always be postponed.

Although I played with an intensely competitive spirit, I didn't go to the club or the café to become a better player, but to experience freedom and to celebrate a series of small triumphs by beating other people. Chess would eventually become my career, but I didn't know that at the time, because to me it felt like a temporary escape from my real career; I studied mathematics, and despite Jan Timman's disbelief (as expressed in his column in *New In Chess* 2017/1), I even hesitantly started working on a dissertation – until, in 1972, my supervisor Jan de Groot (no relation of the chess player A.D. de Groot) suddenly died at the age of 58 after a tragic accident in his own home.

He had always been so friendly and fired with mathematical enthusiasm, that until his death I had kept a tenuous connection with mathematics. On his Wikipedia page I read that 'his students essentially constitute the topology faculties at the Dutch universities'. Could I have been one of these pillars of the topology faculties? Did I not become what I should have

become? No. Apart from my lack of determination, I was simply not talented enough as a mathematician, a decent plodder at best.

Missing out on the greats

Starting in 1968, there was, apart from my club and the chess café on the Leidseplein, another chess den for me: the artists' club De Kring (literally The Circle, but without any connotations of dark conspiracies). Hein Donner, a long-time member of that club, had introduced me there after catching me quoting the philosopher Heidegger, whom he admired, at the Olympiad in Lugano in 1968. Later, other chess players, such as Timman, Sosonko and Hartoch, were to follow. It wasn't really a chess café, of course, but there were sets and clocks and it was open till 4 a.m.

One evening, one of the real artists, a lady singer, overturned the table at which we were engrossed in a small blitz tournament, claiming that she had a right to our attention. We apologized, collected boards, pieces and clocks from the floor and went on playing.

When Hein Donner died in 1988, at the age of 61, the chairman of De Kring held a speech at the funeral in which he dwelt at great length on the qualities that make a great café. De Kring honours one of its most prominent victims, I thought, and I resolved to escape in time.

I have fond memories of both the chess café at Leidseplein and of De Kring, although in a way their finest moments passed me by. Once, Reuben Fine visited the chess café and played some games there, precisely on one of the days that I wasn't there. And one late night at De

Kring, the great drummer Art Blakey came by to join the local musicians. I rarely missed a live jazz evening, but when the demi-god Blakey descended to play for us, I was sadly absent.

Luftmenschen and iron warriors

Last year, the Viennese chess historian Michael Ehn published a book in German about the heyday of the Viennese chess cafés: *Geniales Schach im Wiener Kaffeehaus 1750 – 1918*. It must be a subject dear to his heart, because in 1998 he had already written about the Viennese chess cafés – that time in cooperation with the cultural historian Ernst Strouhal – in a book called *Luftmenschen*. A Luftmensch is completely impractical and lives on air. And indeed, many of these Luftmenschen, playing chess for half an Austrian Krone per game, were forced to live on little more than air.

The book *Luftmenschen* is only 71 pages long and is mainly a sociological description of the members of the Viennese subculture that gathered in the cafés. If I understand the philosophical reasoning correctly, it ends on a rather sceptical note about games in general and chess in particular, probably due to Strouhal.

On his own, in his recent *Geniales Schach*, Ehn has written a bigger (350 pages) and more chess-friendly volume with game notations, diagrams and biographical information on the most prominent visitors of the chess establishments.

I learned from these books that around 1925 there were about 40 cafés in Vienna where chess could be played all day, and often far into the night. Not all of these places were visited by the likes of Tartakower, Grünfeld and Réti, of course.

The most important one was Café Central, a truly magnificent establishment in the heart of Vienna, which functioned as a meeting place for intellectuals, artists, politicians and chess players. In an advertisement in 1919 the café could, with

good reason, call itself ‘the intellectual meeting point of Vienna and home to all chess World Champions’.

One of the regulars was Lev Davidovich Bronstein, better known as Trotsky. Ehn quotes a newspaper report from 1917, when Trotsky had become famous as one of the leaders of the Russian revolution, about his time in Vienna between 1907 and 1914.

‘Almost every Saturday he appeared in Café Central in the Herrengasse, where he played chess with his acquaintances. He had a special passion for chess, which sometimes

(20) and IM Lucas van Foreest (16) left Dieren for a day to take part in the annual Pub Crawlers’ Tournament in Santpoort, a village near Wijk aan Zee. In line with the joviality of the event, it was a competition for duos, and it was won with a large margin by the favourite duo Van Foreest / Lai.

Another participant from Dieren, IM Manuel Bosboom (54), went to another pub: there was a blitz tournament at the Laurierboom café in Amsterdam. As far as I know, this is the only chess café left in Amsterdam, and one could even call it a semi-

‘Though I played with an intense competitive spirit, I didn’t go to the club or the café to become a better player, but to experience freedom.’

overtook him so strongly that, together with his most frequent opponent, the Viennese photographer Steinschneider in the Josefstädterstrasse, who now proudly shows Trotsky’s photo, he went from café to café after the closure of one establishment forced him out before they could finish his revenge game – until he finally landed in Café de l’Europe, where one could still see him at 5 or 6 in the morning, bent over the chessboard.’

Apparently, his comrade Lenin has also paid some visits to the Café Central. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote that all men’s miseries derive from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone. If only these two Russian revolutionaries had been able to stay quietly at their chessboard! But they were the opposite of Luftmenschen – ruthless and determined to change the world, whatever the cost in human suffering.

Dutch pub crawlers

At the recent Open Dutch Championship in Dieren, there was a free day after five rounds. FM Hing Ting Lai

chess café, since on any given day and time it is quite uncertain whether you’ll meet chess players. But they do their best.

Bosboom is a known blitz specialist, his greatest feat being a fine positional victory over Garry Kasparov in a big blitz tournament in Wijk aan Zee in 1999. But the competition at the Laurierboom was stiff. There was the English grandmaster Stuart Conquest and there was Sebastian Bogner, the strongest grandmaster from Switzerland, who had won a rapid tournament at the same establishment only the day before.

I witnessed both tournaments, rejoicing in the knowledge that, although the Laurierboom cannot compete with the splendour of the Café Central, there is a more important difference. In the Viennese coffee houses chess is dead, whereas in the Laurierboom it lives, on a good day.

Bosboom won the blitz tournament. He is one of the Luftmenschen, for who a day without chess is a day not lived. ■



From the masters' notebooks

Isn't it wonderful if grandmasters let you in on the secrets of their opening preparation? **MATTHEW SADLER** takes a look at the books Lajos Portisch and Mikhail Golubev wrote on their favourite openings.

When I was little I loved reading about chess history and many things I read from that time have stayed in my mind. Thinking back, I may not have been exposed to the most reliable historical sources – Edward Lasker's *Chess Secrets I Learnt from the Masters* was a constant companion – so it might well be that half of what formed me as a chess player was a downright lie. Which makes you think a bit! But anyway, one of the things that stuck in my mind was Rubinstein's answer to a question posed about his opening preparation. As I recall, Rubinstein stated that he prepared about 100-120 ideas a year, of which he played about 30-40 in a year and shared 5-10 with others. In idle moments, I would start to calculate how many unplayed ideas Rubinstein would have had in his notebooks when he died, and fantasised about discovering that notebook and using all those ideas!

This idea applies to all the greats.

Think of Kortchnoi! How many openings did he analyse in his life, how many ideas must be in his analyses that will never see the light of day! Recently, while researching some articles about 9-times British Champion H.E. Atkins, I read in the collection of his Best Games that the author (R.N. Coles) had 'been fortunate in having placed at my disposal all his old chess notebooks' and that got me dreaming again of making a great historical discovery. Probably a project for my retirement!

One of the big disappointments from that point of view was Botvinnik. I have a memory – though my memory is probably as vague and unreliable as Edward Lasker's – of talking to Kasparov at the French Team Championships at Auxerre in 1992 and him mentioning that before one of his matches (I think against Beliavsky), Botvinnik had confided his secret opening notebooks to him. Kasparov and his team opened them with trepidation, wondering what

treasures lay in store for them. They were bitterly disappointed – could someone become World Champion with this quality of preparation? I thought of this when reading the New In Chess publication on Botvinnik's duels with Smyslov in 1954, 1957 and 1958. The book presents extracts from Botvinnik's opening preparation notebooks for the 1957 and 1958 matches against Smyslov and indeed... the 'Wow!' factor was definitely missing!

I would have been completely dismissive if the same thing hadn't happened to my analysis. Being a second in the pre-computer age was a pretty tough job. Younger players cannot conceive what it's like, but in those days, you could remain in complete uncertainty about a variation even after two weeks of analysis. You couldn't be 100% certain that you hadn't missed a simple tactic at the start, or even that you'd analysed from the correct position, as Julian Hodgson and Mickey Adams famously didn't when preparing for Mickey's match against Anand. I remember in our early days of working together that I showed Joel Lautier some analysis and saw a not too impressed expression and a rather dubious 'OK' as commentary. That was weeks of work! Weeks of rejecting other lines, spotting machine-like cheapos, poring through old tournament bulletins before I felt sure I'd found the most logical and precise line. But just on its own – without all this context – it looked like nothing special!

Recently there has been a spate of interesting books in which strong players share their insights in a particular opening using their own games as a reference. Ilya Smirin's truly inspirational *King's Indian Warfare* (Quality Chess) was reviewed in a previous column, and this time we have two similar offerings from Gambit: *My Secrets in the Ruy Lopez* by the great Hungarian player Lajos Portisch and *Understanding the Sicilian* by Mikhail Golubev.

The subtitle to *My Secrets in the Ruy Lopez* is ‘unpublished ideas and analysis from decades of elite-level chess’, which is quite a write-up.

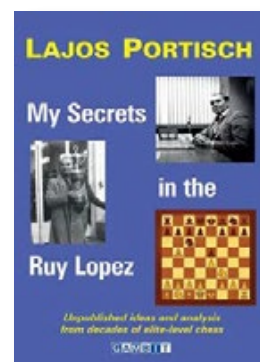
It’s probably useful to start by describing the scope of the book. Portisch starts – just as the title says – after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 and two thirds of the book is devoted to lines arising or derived from his favourite Steinitz / Keres Ruy Lopez lines – 3...♘f6 or 3...a6 followed by 4...d6. The last third of the book deals with the path to the Breyer Variation (3...a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8), which Portisch also played throughout his career (there are games of his against Fischer in 1966, Spassky in 1977 and Timman in 1988 in this chapter!). Note that the lines covered in the book are also restricted to the ones that Portisch played during his career. For example, after 3...a6 4.♙a4 d6

‘In idle moments, I fantasised about discovering Rubinstein’s notebook and using all those ideas!’

5.c3, you will only find coverage of 5...♙d7 6.d4 ♘ge7 (which features twice in two good games against Sax and Short) and not for example of the Siesta Variation (5...f5).

I’m glad this book has been written, but nonetheless I felt rather dissatisfied after reading it. That may be related to my hopes and expectations when the book dropped through my letterbox. I had hoped that Portisch would present a book of his Best Games in the Ruy Lopez, possibly supplemented with classic or contemporary games that had influenced him during his career. I was looking forward to insights about typical middlegame or endgame positions that arise from these systems in which Portisch has built up a great deal of knowledge throughout his career. In general, that experience is the unique factor you would love to learn some-

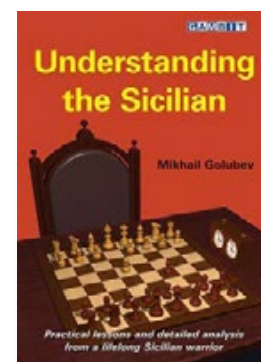
**My Secrets in the
Ruy Lopez
by Lajos Portisch
Gambit, 2017**
★★★★☆



thing about from this great player and it’s not so interesting what the computer thinks about it all.

That does partially happen. Portisch includes a substantial number of his own games (by my count, 32 of the 80 games in the book) and a number of instructive classic older games (around 15, such as Lasker-Capablanca, Havana 1921, 14th match game, or Schlechter-Steinitz, Vienna 1898), but the rest (just under half) is comprised of fairly modern games. It left me a little confused as to the

**Understanding the
Sicilian
by Mikhail Golubev
Gambit, 2017**
★★★★☆



I’m sure that if I was looking to play the Steinitz or Keres systems against the Ruy Lopez, then I would definitely want to consult this book. With prior knowledge of the opening, and some thoughts of my own, I think that some of the ideas in this book would add that extra touch of quality to my repertoire. However, without this desire I just felt a little frustrated with this book: it felt like somewhat of a missed chance. Ideally I would give this book something between 2 and 3 stars, but with a well-earned eating holiday in France in my sights, I’ll give it a generous 3!

■ ■ ■

The Ukrainian Grandmaster Mikhail Golubev is a lifelong Sicilian advocate with both colours (he’s played 1.e4 in 555 of his 560 White games in the database and 1...c5 in 201 out of 207 Black games against 1.e4). In *Understanding the Sicilian* Golubev presents 120 of his own Sicilian games (by my count 54 with Black and 66 with White), covering the entire span of Sicilian lines he has faced in his career. That doesn’t cover the whole Sicilian complex, but it doesn’t do a bad job either. Most of the Black games occur in the Sicilian sidelines and in the section on the Dragon (in which Golubev is an expert and in which he has played 108 of his 111 Open Sicilians with Black!) while his White games cover the whole scala of Open Sicilians (thank goodness – this book would have been a lot less exciting if he’d been a 3.♙b5 advocate!). Particularly noteworthy are his examination of two of his long-time favourites: the Sozin (6.♙c4) against the Najdorf and

purpose of the book. It’s not a biography – despite the claims of the blurb that ‘anecdotes abound, as do reflections on his key rivals’, these passages are not too frequent or revealing. It’s also not a theoretical manual, or in any case it’s not easy to use as such. Concrete lines and recommendations don’t exactly spring out at you from the page as they do in a standard structured opening book. Certainly in the Old Steinitz (3...♘f6 4.0-0 ♙e7) and Keres lines (3...a6 4.♙a4 d6) it felt like very hard work to understand what Portisch was recommending, what the current state of theory is and whether or not a recommended improvement was relevant to modern theory. I also can’t say that the book abounds with middlegame or endgame insights as the majority of commentary is focused on the opening phase.

6. ♖e3 against the popular Taimanov Sicilian (1.e4 c5 2. ♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♘c6 5. ♗c3 ♖c7).

Comparing it to the Smirin book, it scores lower on the inspiration scale, simply because Golubev – despite being a strong Grandmaster – is not as strong a player as Smirin and cannot produce the same astonishing quality of play. However, it scores very highly as a wide-ranging theoretical introduction to the Sicilian, particularly from the White side. What shines through Golubev's annotations are the struggles and considerations of a practical player. The whole practical cycle of playing a line, having a problem, analysing at home, trying again, winning a few good games, but then finding out that it isn't good after all... and having to start all over again, comes across beautifully in this book. Golubev's annotations are open and honest – he describes easily which systems he has struggled with, which positions he has scored well with but isn't quite sure why! – and are sprinkled with a nice little dose of self-deprecating humour, which made the book easy and pleasant to read despite the large number of variations. I'll give some excerpts from Golubev's annotations to his game as Black against Sandipan at Leiden 2008 as an example. It's a relatively unremarkable game (a tough, nervy last-round draw in 52 moves) but Golubev's annotations contain a wealth of little details and insights into the problems Black faces in the 3. ♖b5+ Sicilian.

Sandipan Chanda
Mikhail Golubev
Leiden 2008

Sicilian, Moscow Variation

1.e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. ♖b5+ ♗d7 4. ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 5.c4

This plan, based on playing d4 and achieving a Maroczy Bind structure, is the most topical at the professional level nowadays. It leads to strategically tricky play, the complexity of which is easy to underestimate. While

**Playing the
Ragozin**
by Richard Pert
Quality Chess,
2016
★★★★☆

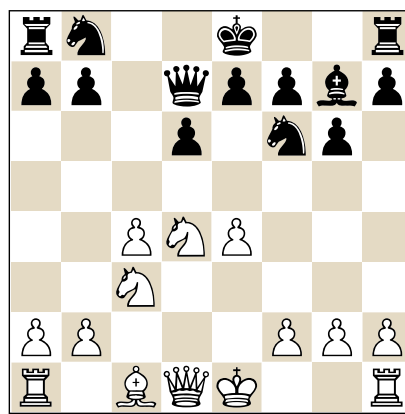


I lost only one of my many long time-control games in this line, and worked on it from time to time, quite often my preparation (and understanding) turns out to have been superficial, and this resulted in some opening problems. Maybe my experience will be helpful to other players at least.

5...g6! If Black permits d4, and fianchettoes his bishop, this is perhaps the most precise move order because in some lines Black does not need an early ...♗f6 or an early ...♗c6.

6. ♗c3 After 6.0-0 ♗g7 7.d4 cxd4 8. ♗xd4 ♗c6 the best White can do is 9. ♖e3 ♗f6 10.f3 0-0 11. ♗c3, which leads to the standard lines discussed below in the note to White's 11th move. Instead 9. ♗e2 is met by 9...♗e5, when White cannot defend the c4-pawn comfortably.

6...♗g7 7.d4 cxd4 8. ♗xd4 ♗f6



9.f3 Before my game against Sandipan I had doubts about what to do after 9.h3 and decided that Black can try 9...♖c7 (avoiding 9...0-0 10. ♖e3 ♗c6 11.0-0, Adams-Cheparinov, Baku 2008, with a position I did not like much for Black). I mentioned this idea in *Chess Today* after the game; let's say it was my contribution to the Moscow Variation. Later

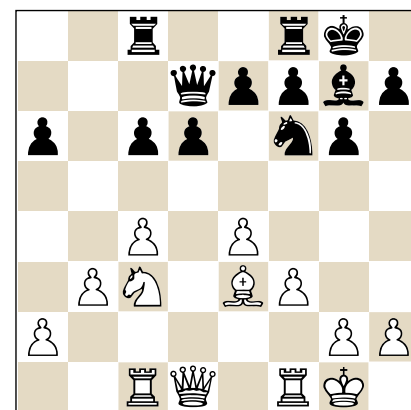
the same year, the first game in this line, Hracek-Agdestein, Dresden Olympiad 2008, was played: 9...♖c7 10.b3 ♖a5 11. ♖d2 ♗xe4 12. ♗xe4 ♖e5 13. ♖b1 f5 14. ♖c3 ♖xe4+ 15. ♖xe4 fxe4 16. ♗b5 ♖xc3+ 17. ♗xc3 with only a marginal plus for White in the endgame. It was repeated in many games afterwards.

9...0-0! 10. ♖e3 After 10.0-0 the very important equalising idea 10...♖c8 11.b3 d5 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13. ♗xd5 e6 was introduced in Delchev-Ivanchuk, European Championship, Istanbul 2003.

10...♗c6

After Ivanchuk's important revelation in the game against Delchev, it became clear that the lines with ♗de2 for White can be prevented by Black, so the old standard set-up with ♖e3 became normal again. It's not as easy for Black to equalize by preparing ...d5 as was thought decades ago. So, some discussion is going on here – and can be expected to continue.

11. ♖c1 ♖ac8 12.b3 a6 13. ♗xc6!? bxc6 14.0-0



Nothing dramatic has happened, but White has a slight advantage. ...a6 is not particularly useful in the structure that has arisen.

14...♖c7 15. ♖e2 Two more direct attempts deserve mentioning:

– 15.c5 d5 16.exd5 ♖fd8 17.d6 exd6, where Black may hope to neutralize White's slight initiative and maybe more dangerous.

– 15. ♗a4, when 15...c5 16.e5 ♗d7 17.exd6 allows White to increase the pressure.

15...♗d7 16. ♗a4 c5 Now Black does not have any particular problems. **17. ♖d2 ♗e5 18. ♗c3 e6 19. ♖h6 ♖xh6 20. ♖xh6**

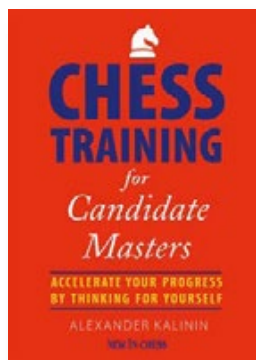
20... ♖e7?! This inaccuracy went unpunished. 20...f5 is also insufficient, because of 21.exf5 ♜xf5 22. ♖e3, but 20... ♘c6! is correct, intending 21.f4 f5. **21. ♖d2?!** 21.f4 is best, with a serious initiative after 21... ♘g4 22. ♖h3 and if 22...f5 23. ♜fe1. **21... ♘c6 22.f4 f5** and the game was eventually drawn on move 52.

The book didn't extract the Ooohs! and Aaaahs! from me that Smirin's book did, but it did produce lots of little nods of the head and 'Right... OK, so that's how this fits together'. The comments to the Sandipan game (of which this is just a small extract) could only come from a practical player who has struggled at various times over a period of many years to find the most precise counter to a very irritating line. The nice thing about Golubev is that he's willing to share all this sweat with you for nothing (or nearly nothing!). All-in-all a very good book, 4 well-deserved stars!



Playing the Ragozin by the English IM and chess trainer Richard Pert (Quality Chess) is a more standard opening book and reaches the customary high standard of Quality Chess opening manuals, which probably says enough already! In 440 pages, the book offers a complete repertoire against 1.d4 d5 2.c4, recommending the Ragozin against ♘f3 systems (2...e6 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 ♙b4) and the unusual 2...e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 – with which Hou Yifan has experimented – if White tries to avoid ♘f3. Pert also covers move order deviations such as 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 (the Catalan), 4. ♙g5 or 4.e3. The previous work on the Ragozin I'd seen was a ChessBase DVD by Alejandro Ramirez, which though excellent did rather tend to stress the drawing tendencies of the opening. Pert does his utmost to draw up a repertoire that is more than an equalising tool. One of his interesting recommendations is to meet the solid 5. ♙g5 with 5...dxc4, transposing back to a Vienna. After the normal 6.e4,

**Chess Training
for Candidate
Masters
by Alexander
Kalinin
New In Chess,
2017
★★★★☆**



he even examines two possibilities in some detail: the standard 6...c5, in which he has prepared a number of new ideas, and the rarely-played 6...b5. In the good old pre-computer days, this would be a repertory that could easily have kept you going for 10 years! It's quite amazing – and a testament to the quality of the chess book market at the moment – to see this sort of analytical work published like this while the lines are still fresh. A really good opening book – 4 stars!



Finally, there is Alexander Kalinin's *Chess Training for Candidate Masters* (New In Chess). The author was completely unknown to me but he is a Russian Grandmaster living in the United States who has trained the American GM Daniel Naroditsky (who wrote the foreword to the book). Essentially, the book is an exposition of Kalinin's approach to training young chess players summarised in what Kalinin calls 'Four directions of independent work':

1. Forming a relationship with chess as an art
2. Perfecting analytical mastery, which allows one to study critically your own play and the games of others
3. Study of the classical heritage
4. Drawing the lessons from interaction with one's competitors and with more experienced players.

As Kalinin writes, 'the attempt to reveal the above areas is the main aim of the present book'. To do this, Kalinin makes extensive use of episodes from his own career, in which progress did not always come

easily: 'By delving into this book, the reader will be able to see the mistakes I made on my way and, I hope, will be able to draw useful lessons for themselves'.

The first time I read through the book, I was a little blasé about the content. Perhaps it came from the fact that the main ideas – the four directions of independent work – match well with the way I have always worked at chess, so it's easy to think that nothing new is being said. 'Why do I need to read a whole chapter to tell me what I know already?' was the feeling! However, reading the book a second time, I paid a little less attention to the things I felt I knew already and focused more on the chess content... and this is actually extremely interesting! As the blurb promises, the bulk of this training material has never been published before and there is some fascinating analysis on all areas of the game.

I also greatly liked the little titbits of advice that are to be found throughout the book. For example, in a correspondence game, Kalinin was considering sacrificing an extra exchange to reach a dangerous attacking position a rook down: 'In an over-the-board game, I would have headed for this position without any qualms, but given the possibility of computer defence, I needed additional comfort. What was that? The fact that I myself also used the computer to help did not solve the problem as the net of variations was too wide. But here I recalled a device which Mark Dvoretsky pointed out was used by Mikhail Tal. In deciding on an irrational sacrifice, the magician from Riga would convince himself by calculating a few spectacular variations (not necessarily always correct) where the attacking side triumphs and which would give him the confidence that the sacrifice would succeed in practice.' A wonderful piece of advice! I'd probably like to give this a high 3 stars, but I'm going on holiday now so let's finish on a high: 4 stars! ■

Test: 1,2,3,4

Giri beats Ding Liren in warm-up match

In Wenzhou, a port and industrial city in South East China, Dutch number one Anish Giri defeated his Chinese counterpart Ding Liren in a friendly four-game match that was part of both players' preparation for the World Cup in Georgia. Our contributing editor struck in the second game, when, under pressure, his opponent allowed him to show his tactical acumen.



NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Ding Liren
Anish Giri
Wenzhou 2017 (match-2)
Giuoco Piano

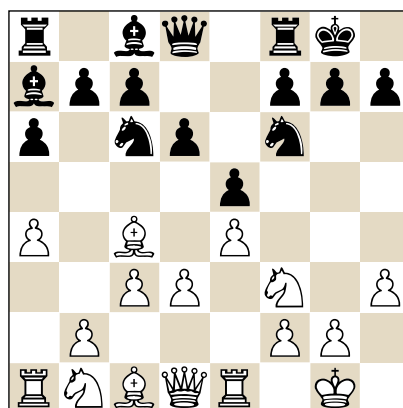
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0 ♜f6 5.d3 0-0

People who are worried about early ♙g5 variations usually postpone castling, and some are even including an early ...h6 to remove it from the position altogether. In my view, if one is so afraid of the ♙g5 pin, one should stick to the Caro-Kann.

6.h3

The standard 6.c3 is often met with the immediate 6...d5!? nowadays, so White has been trying various move orders to get around the pawn push in the centre. Would I have played 6...d5 against 6.c3, though? I don't know.

6...d6 7.c3 a6 8.a4 ♙a7 9.♖e1

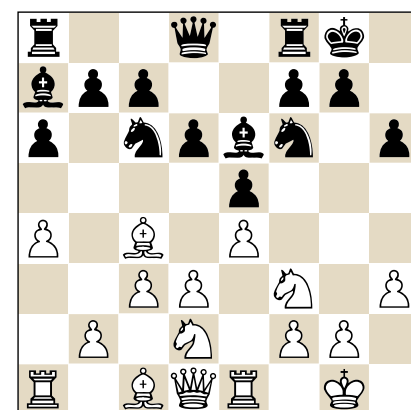


With a combined effort by both sides, this position is reached in most Italian games at the highest level. The latest trend here is 9...b5, intro-

duced at top-level by Levon Aronian, playing in Spanish spirits. Seems rather impulsive to me, but on the other hand, when that rush of Caucasian blood suddenly hits you...

9...h6 10.♘bd2 ♙e6

This is a set-up that has been played by Kramnik himself in the last couple of years. The main advantage of this system is that there are hardly any move order subtleties and nuances (you can always just go ...d6, ...a6, ...♙a7, ...0-0, ...h6, in any order, and then ...♙e6) and the plans are very clear and straightforward. As I am ageing as well, these are the things that I start prioritizing.



11.♙xe6 fxe6 12.♜f1

Ding Liren decided not to go b4 now, or on the next move, which is a strategic decision that affects the entire game. Most games thus far have continued with b4, gaining space and only later determining the placement of the d2-knight.

12.b4 ♘h5 13.♞a2 ♞f6 14.♘c4 b5 15.♘e3 ♙b6 16.♘g4 ♞e7 17.♙e3 ♙xe3 18.fxe3 eventually led to a draw

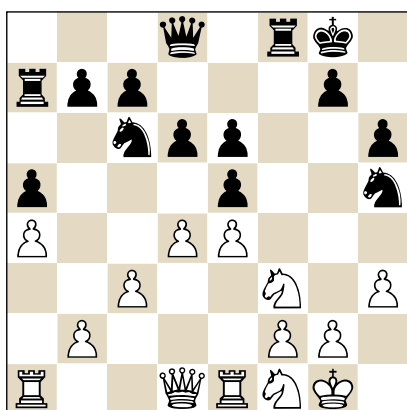
in Anand-Carlsen at Norway Chess this year.

12...♘h5 Here ...♘h5-f4 is a standard plan, and after ...♙f6 the pressure along the f-file can get mildly annoying for White.

13.♙e3 a5!?

At some point I should start pretending that b2-b4 is an idea worth preventing; otherwise it would seem that my opponent had outsmarted me by postponing it.

14.♙xa7 ♖xa7 15.d4



A very direct approach, but I had enough experience playing such structures with White to know that there is no need to panic. One thing Black can always do is capture on d4 and plant a knight on b4, but here I like my next move, keeping the tension, even better.

15...♙f6 16.♞e3 ♘f4

Here I started liking my position quite a bit. One solid plan is to go ...♞aa8 and ...♞f7, ...♞af8. Another, more funky one, is to go ...♞a6-b6.

In any case, I expected White to start with ♘g3 or ♞c1! here.

17.h4?!

The idea of h4/g3 is often a good one, expelling the annoying f4-knight, but eventually the white kingside weaknesses will tell in this game.

17...♙g6

17...exd4! 18.cxd4 e5! was already good at this point, but I was thinking in more conceptual terms and felt there was no need for concrete action with the rook still on a7.

18.g3 ♞aa8

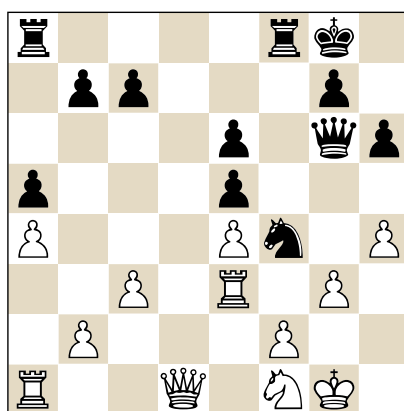
While thinking about my opponent's move, I realized that what I had done



Perhaps as a courtesy to their foreign guest, the organizers had turned around Ding Liren's name on the match poster, deviating from common Chinese practice to have the family name first.

was probably not too great, since the position after 19.dxe5 started looking pretty equal to me. Having said that, my position is still comfortable, and considering the way things went I don't regret my last two timid moves all that much.

19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♘xe5 dxe5



21.f3

I was surprised to see this move so quickly. But on the other hand it is probably going to be hard to avoid this move altogether.

After 21.♙h2 ♞ad8 22.♙c2 ♘d5 23.♞e2 ♘f6 I would seriously consider postponing f3 even here, but with ...♙h5 and ...g5 coming next, he still does not have a comfortable life.

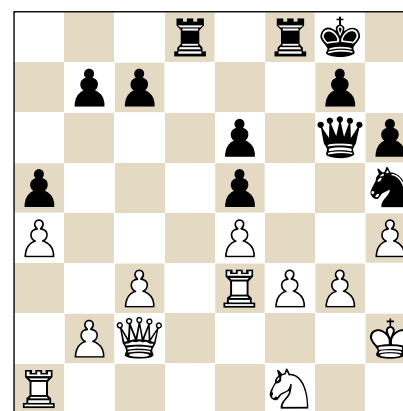
21...♞ad8 I played this move on general grounds and only later decided not to fight for the d-file and focus all my pieces on the kingside.

22.♙c2 22.♙e1 was similar.

22...♘h5 23.♙h2

A crucial moment in the game. Black is obviously comfortable, and the first instinct (at least mine) is to prepare ...g5, while at the same time keeping an eye on the d-file. After quite some thought, however, I realized that if I continued this way – let's say with a move like ...♙f6 followed by ... g5, or ...♞d6 followed by ...♞fd8 – the position would eventually simplify and the fun would be over before it had even started.

After some more consideration I decided to give up the d-file, keep life in the position and introduce some more ideas on the kingside.



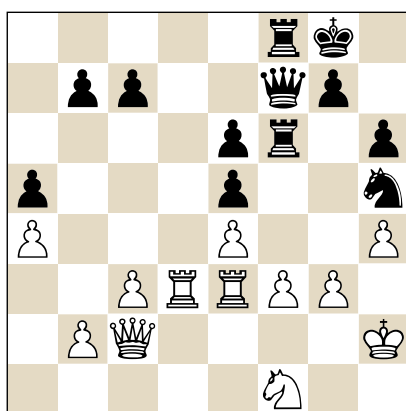
23...♞f6! This decision essentially won me the game.

24.♞d1 ♞df8 The point.

25.♞dd3 ♙f7 Here 25...♙e8 seemed more natural and it was my first instinct, keeping an eye on the

a4-pawn and not allowing the ♖d7 tempo, but suddenly I started seeing some cheap tricks involving the weak g3 point, and for that I needed the option of ...♙f7-f6.

After the first plan that came to mind (25...♙e8 26.♙d1 g5 27.hxg5 hxg5 28.♙g2 g4) I felt that after 29.♘h2 gxf3+ 30.♙xf3 ♙g6, even though I am on the right side of things, White would have enough resources to maintain the balance.



26. ♙d1?

Remarkably, this natural move, which would be the only move against 25...♙e8, is a big mistake here. It is very important for White to be able to meet ...♙g6 with ♙f2. These one-step-at-a-time queen manoeuvres reminded me of the corresponding squares that kings stick to in some pawn endgame studies.

The move to be played was 26.♙d2! (26.♙f2 would be premature in view of 26...g5). Now against both plans – ...g5 and ...♙g6xg3 – White will be able to hold his own:

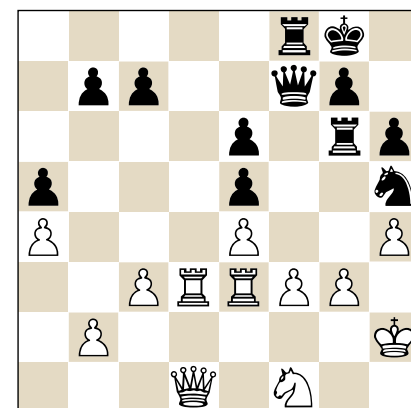
– 26...g5 27.hxg5 hxg5 28.♙d8, and with a pair of rooks off, it's hard to imagine White not surviving this.

– 26...♙g6 27.♙f2 ♙f6 It's possible to prepare a knight or a rook sacrifice even here, and Black doesn't seem to run much risk in any of the complications, but objectively I can't find an advantage either: 28.♙d7 ♘xg3 29.♘xg3 ♙xh4+ 30.♙g2 h5 31.♙e1 ♙g5 32.♙h3 ♙f4 33.♙ed1, and Black

always has a perpetual, for example with ...♙h4+ and ...♙g5+, but I don't see any real ideas to achieve more than a draw.

26... ♙g6!

Introducing the idea of a sacrifice on g3. Ding took his time on the next move, and the strength of this idea slowly dawned on both of us.



27. ♙e1

A step in the right direction. Both natural moves, 27.♙d8 and 27.♙d7, were losing by force already.

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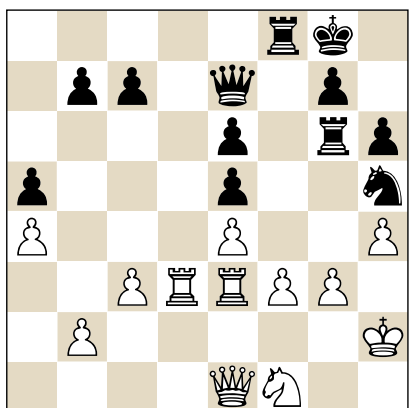


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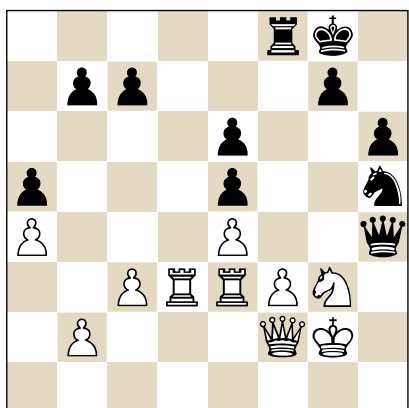
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Hinting at the inevitable.

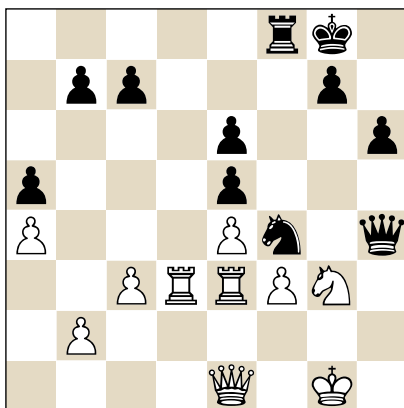


28. ♔f2 was the only way to fight on. White's next move is ♖d1, so the best thing to do is to nevertheless crash through with 28... ♜xg3! 29. ♘xg3 ♜xh4+ 30. ♔g2 (30. ♔g1 ♘xg3 31. ♔g2 looks clever, except that it's mate after 31... ♔h1+! 32. ♔xg3 ♜f6! 33. ♜h2 ♜g6+ 34. ♔h3 ♜f1+ 35. ♔h4 ♜g2)

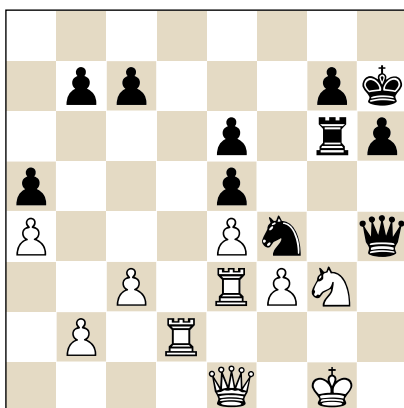


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

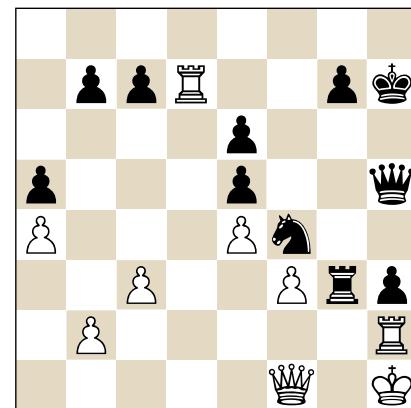
30... ♔xh4+ 31. ♔g1



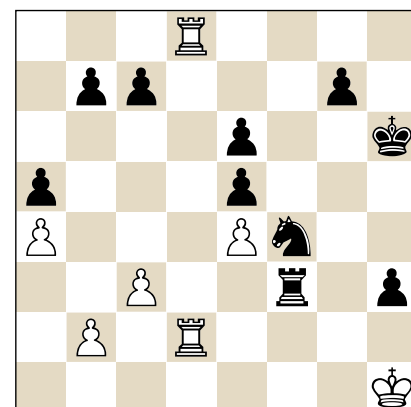
32. ♖d8+ ♔h7 33. ♖d2 ♜g6



**37...h4 38.♖e1 h3 39.♖d1 ♔h5
40.♖d7**



41. ♔xf3 ♖xf3 42. ♖hd2 ♔h6
43. ♖d8 43. ♖xc7 g5 is dead lost.



			1	2	3	4	
Anish Giri	NED	2772	½	1	½	½	2½
Ding Liren	CHN	2777	½	0	½	½	1½



Jan Timman

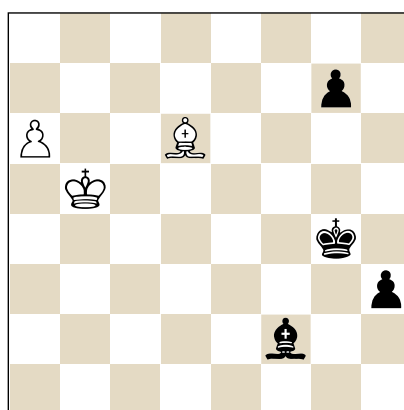
Inspired Jobava reassures fans

After a number of rating draining setbacks, Baadur Jobava confidently claimed the Xtracon Open in Helsingor, Denmark. **JAN TIMMAN** takes a closer look at the Georgian's brilliancies. And pays tribute to the creative combativity of the Great Dane, Bent Larsen.

For the second time the Xtracon Open was held in the port city of Helsingor. Denmark's biggest Open used to be called Politiken Cup, but after 37 years they found a new main sponsor. Xtracon is a data-service company. This year's edition attracted a record number of 433 participants, two more than two years ago. Among the new faces were

Vitiugov and Jobava, two great favourites to win the event. Then there were some strong veterans who had played the tournament in a hoary past: Short and Sokolov. All in all, the top was slightly stronger than in previous years. I was thinking that a player would need 8½ points to win, and this turned out to be correct. Halfway the event, two grandmasters led the field with a perfect score: the Croatian Bosiocic and the young Norwegian promise Urkedal. All the main favourites had dropped a half point or a full point on the way. In Round 6, the leaders had their head-to-head. Urkedal almost got to 6 out of 6.

Marin Bosiocic
Frode Urkedal
Helsingor 2017 (6)

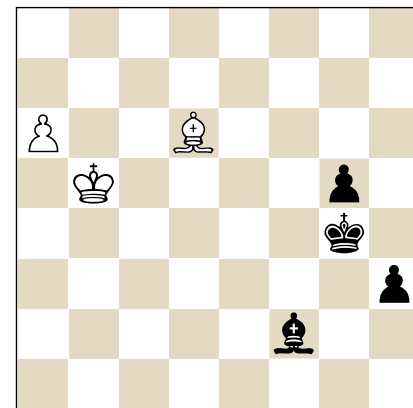


position after 55...♙f2

The endgame is winning for Black, but there are technical problems.

56.♙c7 White's best attempt. He is just sitting back and waiting. In case of 56...♙f3 he has 57.♙b6, and the white pawn queens with check.

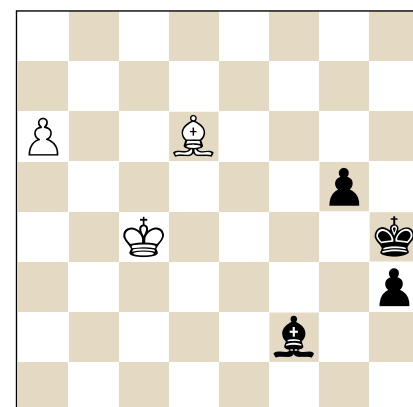
56...g5 57.♙d6



57...♙h4 Inaccurate. Black wants to take his g-pawn to g3, but as we will see, he should have removed his bishop from f2 first.

With 57...♙a7 58.♙c7 ♙h4 59.♙c4 g4 60.♙d8+ ♙g3 61.♙c7+ ♙f2!, followed by 62...♙g1, he would have won smoothly.

58.♙c4 White changes tack. Now he wants to take his king to the king-side.



58...g4? It is almost unbelievable that this natural advance makes it impossible for Black to win the game. With 58...♙g4 he could have returned to the correct path; after 59.♙d3 he can keep the white king away with 59...♙f3.

59.♙e7+ The saving check. After 59...♙g3 60.♙d6+ Black cannot use square f2.

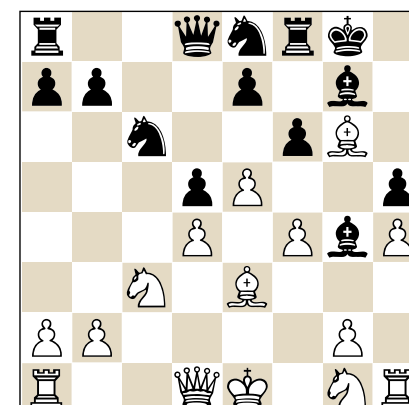
59...♙h5 60.♙d6 Now Black can no longer make progress. An endgame full of study motifs.

60...♙g5 61.♙g3 ♙f5 62.♙d3 ♙a7 63.♙h2 ♙b6 64.♙g3 ♙f2 65.♙e2 ♙b6 66.♙d3 ♙a7 67.♙h2 ♙e6 68.♙e4 ♙d7

Draw.

10...h5 11.♘d3 ♘c6 Incredible. Black sacrifices his g-pawn in an attempt to find counterplay.

12.♙xg6 ♙g4



13.♘ge2

If Vitiugov had played 13.♘f3, things would have been very difficult for Black, and if Jobava had followed the same plan as in the game, he would have lost: 13...♙h6 14.♙d2 ♘g7 15.♘g5!, with a decisive advantage.

13...♙h6 14.♙d2 ♘g7 15.♙c2 e6 16.0-0 fxe5 17.fxe5 ♙xe3+ 18.♙xe3 ♙f5 19.♙a4 ♙xh4

And so Black got away unscathed. The game ended in a draw.

20.♙xc6 bxc6 21.♘f4 ♖ab8 22.b3 ♖b7 23.♙e1 ♙g5 24.♙e3 ♙h3 25.♘ce2 ♙g4 26.♘g3 ♘f5 27.♘xf5 ♖xf5 28.♖f2 ♖g7 29.♖c1 ♖f8 30.♖cf1 h4 31.♙c1 ♙f3 32.♘xe6 ♙xg2+ 33.♖xg2 ♖xg2+ 34.♙h1 ♖c2+ 35.♙g1

Draw.

With a short draw in the final round, Jobava stayed ahead of his pursuers – eight in all – by half a point. This victory was just what he needed. After his excellent second place in the European Championship in Minsk he had had a rough time in the Leuven leg of the Grand Chess Tour. Next he had travelled to Iran to participate in the Stars Cup, where again he played far beneath his normal level and ended up shedding about 30 rating points. ‘The first thing I did when I arrived in Denmark, was to order a large beer,’ he told me. In Iran, that had been impossible.

LENNART OOTES



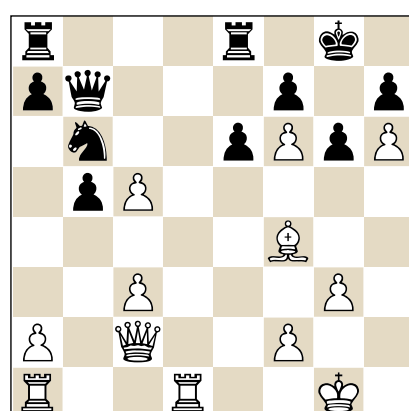
Baadur Jobava, finally victorious again in the Xtracon Open, won several games in great style. ‘The first thing I did when I arrived in Denmark, was to order a large beer.’

After seven rounds two favourites had taken the lead with 6½ points: Jobava and Short. Jobava won their personal encounter. The game had a critical moment.

Baadur Jobava

Nigel Short

Helsingor 2017 (8)



position after 23.dxc5

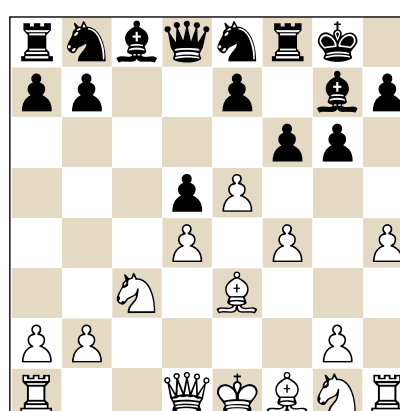
Here, Short played **23...♘c4** and his position was overrun after **24.♙d6! ♙f3 25.a4** The d6-bishop is a monster, which is why he should have gone 23...e5! in order to keep the bishop from d6. White would still be slightly better, but Black would be able to hold.

After this crucial victory Jobava only needed two draws to win the tournament. In the penultimate round, however, he was facing Vitiugov as Black. Jobava didn’t seem too worried, however, because he was seen having a beer before the game. It all ended well for him, although he had seemed to be in serious trouble at the start.

Nikita Vitiugov

Baadur Jobava

Helsingor 2017 (9)



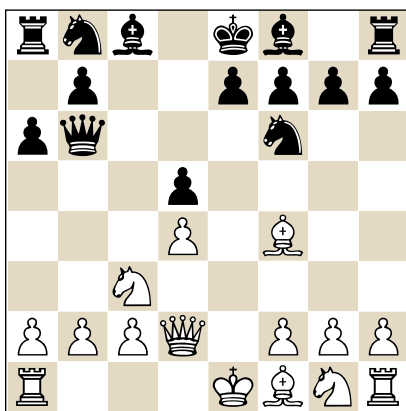
position after 10.f4

What should Black do against the threat of 11.h5, with a decisive attack?

As always, Jobava's games were very worthwhile. The following tour de force yielded him the brilliancy prize.

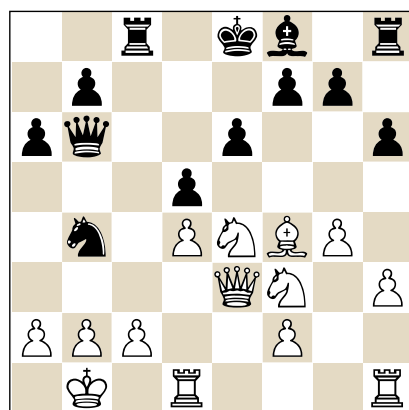
Kevin Goh Wei Ming
Baadur Jobava
 Helsingor 2017 (5)
 Queen's Pawn Game

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗f4 c5 3.e3 cxd4
4.exd4 ♖b6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙d2 d5

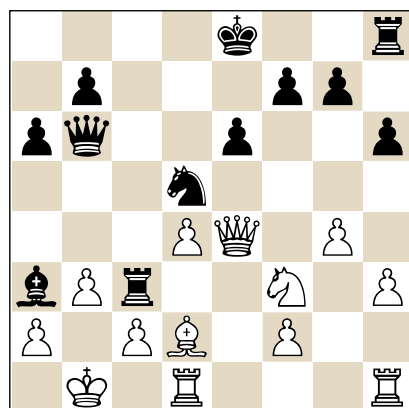


By a transposition of moves a position has arisen that Jobava prefers to play as White. But he turns out to be quite adept on the black side of it, too.

7.0-0-0 e6 8.♗d3 ♗d7 9.♙e3 ♗b5 10.g4 h6 11.h3 ♘c6 12.♘f3 ♗xd3 13.♖xd3 ♘b4 14.♖dd1
 More accurate would have been 14.♖d2 ♖c8 15.♗b1, with roughly equal chances.
14...♘e4 15.♗b1 ♖c8 16.♘xe4



16...dxe4 Objectively speaking, 16...♘xc2 would have been better, but Jobava prefers to sacrifice a pawn.
17.♙xe4 ♘d5 18.♗d2 ♗a3 19.b3 ♖c3!



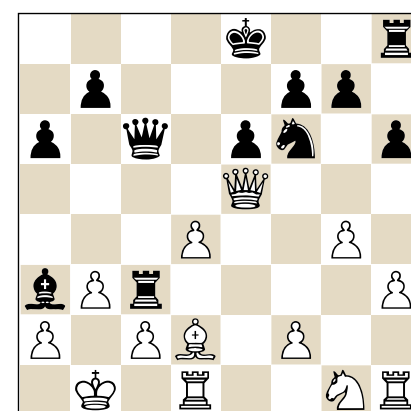
The point of the pawn sacrifice. The white queenside has been paralysed.
20.♘g1 The wrong idea. White wants to defend, but does so by making his pieces too passive.

The black attack is not yet very strong, and with 20.♘e5 he could have started looking for a counter-attack, meeting 20...0-0 with 21.g5.

20...♘f6

Not the best moment for this move. Stronger was 20...♖c7 first, increasing the pressure on c2. After 21.♘e2 ♘f6 the white c-pawn would fall.

21.♙e5 ♖c6



This is the position Jobava had been aiming for. White will not find it easy to chart his way through this jungle.

22.d5

22.♙a5 was also possible, but it was hard to see that White is fine after 22...♖xc2 23.♙xa3 ♖xd2 24.♖xd2 ♗xh1 25.♗d6!.

22...♘xd5 23.♙xg7 ♖f8 24.♘e2 ♖xc2 25.♘d4?

Overlooking the black combination. After 25.♗d4 the position would

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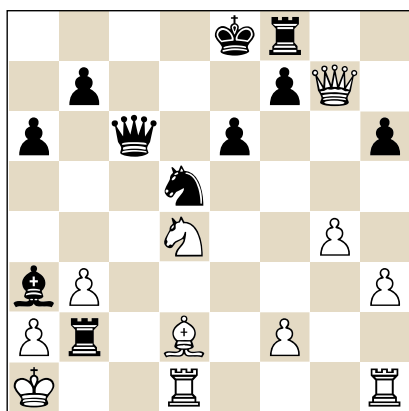


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have been dynamically balanced.
25...♖b2+ 26.♔a1

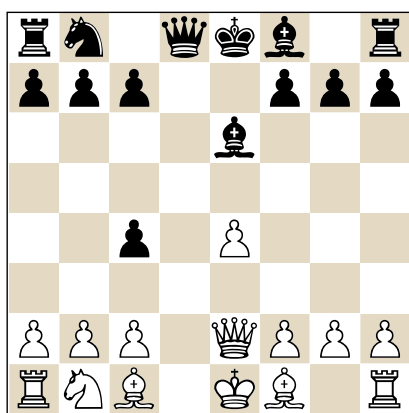


26...♕c3!! A magnificent queen sacrifice. White will be mated.
27.♖xe6 ♕c2 28.♖c7+ ♔d7
 Black resigned.

Jobava played a number of attractive attacking games. Here's another one.

Alexander Shabalov
Baadur Jobava
 Helsingor 2017 (6)
 Petroff Defence

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖f6 3.♖xe5 d6
4.♖c4 ♖xe4 5.♕e2 A system that Wei Yi has also played.
5...d5 Unusual but not bad. The alternative is 5...♕e7.
6.d3 ♖e6 7.dxe4 dxc4



8.♖d2

White is trying to win a pawn, but is neglecting his development. 8.♖c3 would probably have been better.

8...♖c6 9.♖xc4 ♕h4

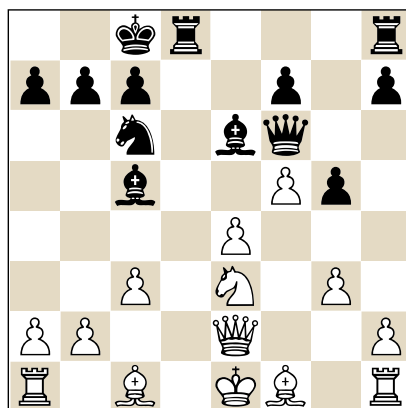
The alternative was 9...♖c5, with excellent compensation.

10.c3 0-0-0 11.g3 ♕f6 12.f4

Here, 12.♖e3 was called for to keep

the black bishop from c5. The text is not so bad, but it allows Jobava to go for sharp complications.

12...♖c5 13.♖e3 g5 14.f5



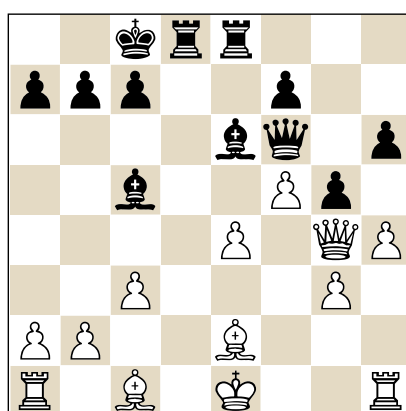
14...♖e5! Very elegant. White is well advised to force Black to exchange the knight right away.

15.♖g4 ♖xg4 16.♕xg4 h6 17.h4 ♖he8

Always in that inimitable style. As a matter of fact, 17...♖d7 would also have been a strong move to clear the black queen's way to the queenside.

18.♖e2

Obvious, but now Jobava gets the chance to go on a combinatory spree. The only way to equalize was 18.hxg5 ♖xf5 19.♖e2!, and the queens leave the board.



18...♖c4!

Absolutely brilliant. The point of the piece sacrifice is that after 19.♖xc4 ♕c6, Black gets a decisive attack. White must try to keep the e-file closed with 20.♖e6+ fxe6 21.f6, but then 21...♖d3! is a hammer-blow.

19.hxg5

After a long think Shabalov tries something else.

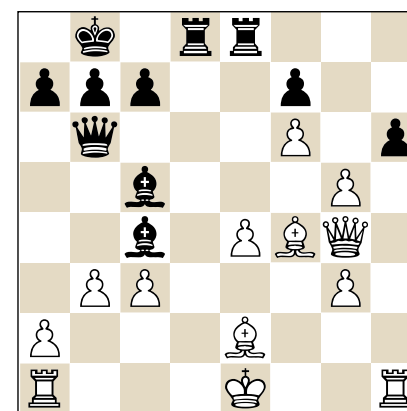
19...♕d6!

Introducing a mating threat. Now 20.♖xc4 is impossible in view of 20...♖xe4+, and mate.

20.f6+ ♔b8 21.♖f4 ♕b6!

Again the best square for the queen. Black is threatening to capture on b2.

22.b3



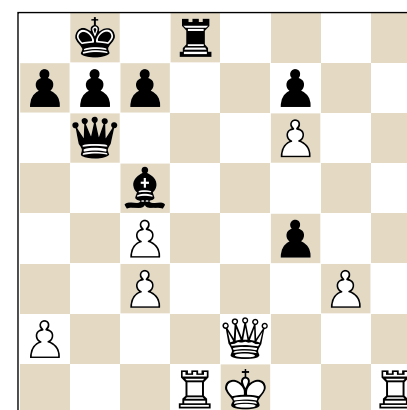
22...♖xe4

It's a pity that Black neglects to go for the crowning glory. With 22...hxg5 he could have lent his attack decisive strength, the point being that 23.♖xg5 would be met by the devastating 23...♖g1!, leaving White on the ropes after 24.♕f3 ♖xe2 25.♖xe2 ♕b5+.

23.bxc4 hxg5

And here, the immediate 23...♖de8 would still have been enough for a decisive advantage. 24...hxg5 is only effective after 24.♖h2.

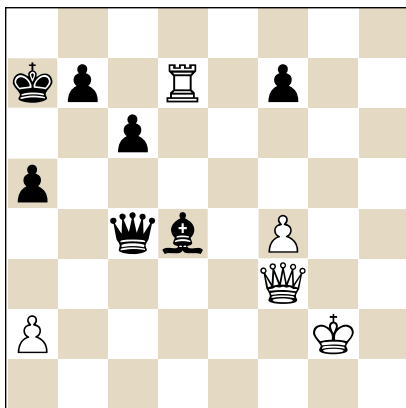
24.♕f3 ♖xe2+ 25.♕xe2 gxf4 26.♖d1!



White has defended optimally, so Black will have to come up with another attack.

26...♖xd1+ 27.♕xd1 ♕xf6 28.♕f3 ♖e3 29.gxf4 ♕xc3+ 30.♖e2 ♕d2+ 31.♖f1 a5 32.♖h8+ ♔a7 33.♖h5 ♖d4

34. ♖d5 c6 35. ♖d7 ♕c1+ 36. ♔g2
♕xc4



37. ♕e4

In time-trouble, White goes for the wrong move. Correct was 37. ♕b3, after which Black has no other option than to go for perpetual check with 37... ♕e2+ 38. ♔h1 ♕f1+.

37... ♕xa2+ 38. ♔h3 ♕b3+ 39. ♔g4 c5

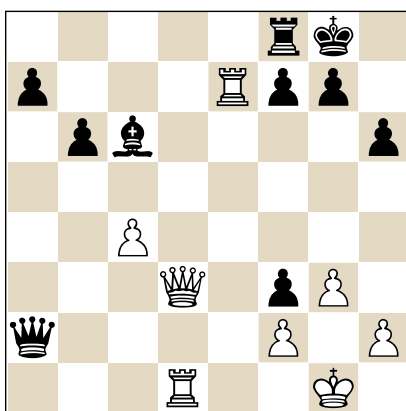
Winning. The road for the a-pawn is clear.

40. f5 a4 41. ♕e1 ♕b5 42. ♖d8 a3 43. ♕d2 ♖f6

White resigned.

My own play was often marred by concentration errors in the fourth hour, which spoiled a number of promising positions. In the beginning, the concentration was still there.

Jan Timman
Benjamin Haldorsen
Helsingor 2017 (4)



position after 29...h6

This position is hard to win, since Black has two pawns for the exchange.
30. ♕c3! Threatening to surround



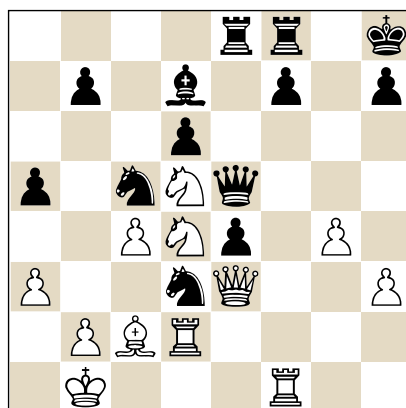
Bent 'I play to win' Larsen (1935-2010)
left a rich legacy.

the queen; but the text also has a special point. After a long think Haldorsen decided to go for 30... ♖a4

This enabled me to liquidate to an advantageous endgame with 31. ♖a1 ♕b3 32. ♖e3!, and convert it to a win.

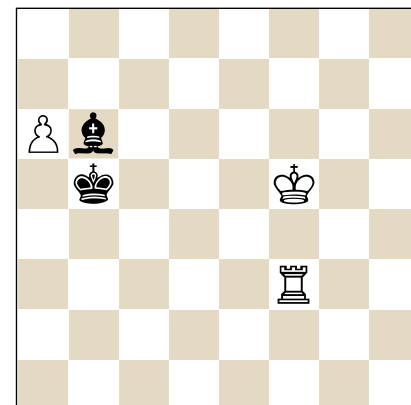
But why did he not withdraw his queen? After 30... ♕a6 he would have square c8, making a sortie to h3 possible. I will give you the answer to this question later.

On the night of Round 7, I gave a very well attended lecture about Bent Larsen: almost all 200 chairs in the commentary room were taken. I will give you two positions from my lecture, also for you to solve.



Westerinen-Larsen
Helsinki 1969, 6th match game
position after 26. ♖xd5

White looks like having good compensation for the pawn. How did Larsen manage to win?

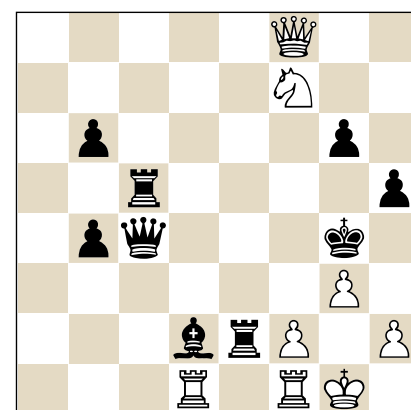


Larsen-Miles
Bled/Portoroz 1979
position after 56... ♕b5

From a later stage in Larsen's career. How did he manage to win this endgame?

I ended my lecture with the fascinating final fragment from Larsen's game against Jelen. Tim Krabbé has written about this, so a number of older readers will be familiar with it. But there undoubtedly is a generation that has not yet seen it.

Iztok Jelen
Bent Larsen
Ljubljana/Portoroz 1977

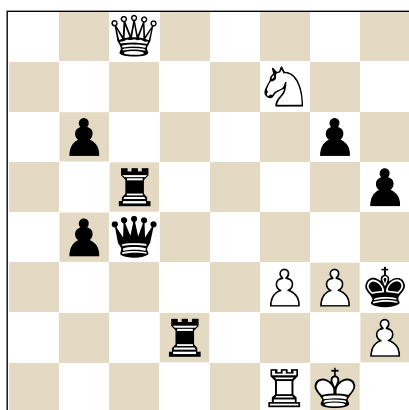


position after 33... ♕g4

An unusual position. The black king has escaped from a dangerous attack and is now threatening to participate in a counter-attack. After, for example, 34. ♖h6+ ♕h3 White would be lost.

34. ♖xd2 An exchange sacrifice meant to start a mating attack. In

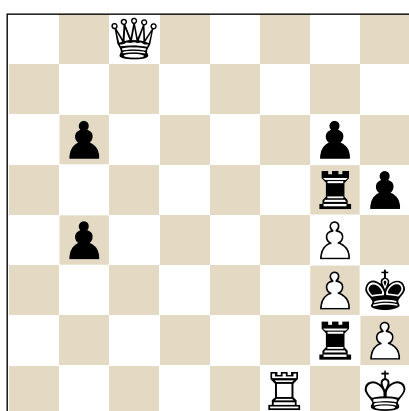
reality, however, it turns out to be a drawing combination! Stronger was 34.♔d8! ♕xf7 35.h3+! ♔f5 36.♕d3+, and White wins the rook on e2. In time-trouble this was not easy to see. **34...♖xd2 35.f3+ ♔h3 36.♕c8+!** Jelen had pinned his hopes on this elegant queen sacrifice.



36...♕g4!! A magnificent counter-sacrifice with which Black ensures the safety of his king.

37.♘g5+ Forced, since after 37.fxg4 ♖xc8 the black king would have square g4 to run to.

37...♖xg5 38.fxg4 ♖g2+ 39.♔h1 Now Black has perpetual check, which many players would have settled for. But Larsen nearly always played to win.



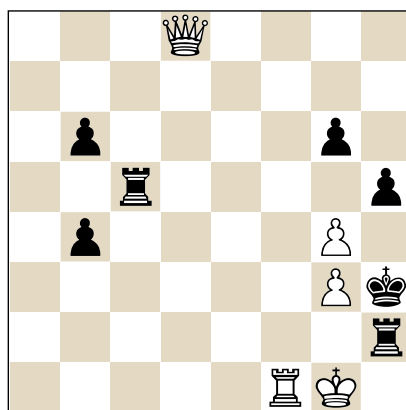
39...♖c5! An awkward question for players in time-trouble: where to put the queen?

40.♕d8? The notorious 40th move. There seems to be nothing wrong with the text, since White is threatening mate in one. But he should still have gone for 40.♕d7 or 40.♕e6, after which Black has nothing more than perpetual check.

40...♖xh2+ 41.♔g1

Helsingor 2017

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5	Sunilduth Lyna Narayanan	IND	2564	8
6	Nigel Short	ENG	2688	8
7	Ivan Saric	CRO	2621	8
8	Andrey Kvon	UZB	2500	8
9	Mads Andersen	DEN	2586	8
10	Frode Urkedal	NOR	2543	7½
11	Jon Ludvig Hammer	NOR	2628	7½
12	Daniele Vocaturo	ITA	2592	7½
13	Axel Delorme	FRA	2518	7½
14	Alexander Shabalov	USA	2549	7½
15	Simen Agdestein	NOR	2604	7½
16	Alexander Motylev	RUS	2680	7½
17	Francesco Sonis	ITA	2440	7½
18	Jonny Hector	SWE	2497	7½
19	Arghyadip Das	IND	2416	7½
20	Kristian Stuvik Holm	NOR	2403	7½
21	Filip Boe Olsen	DEN	2189	7½
22	Jan-Christian Schröder	GER	2539	7½
23	Stephen Dishman	ENG	2313	7½
24	Ivan Sokolov	NED	2626	7
25	Jan Timman	NED	2578	7
26	Dmitrij Kollars	GER	2510	7
27	Nicolai Getz	NOR	2415	7
28	Junta Ikeda	AUS	2427	7
29	Sasa Martinovic	CRO	2570	7
30	Jakob Aabling-Thomsen	DEN	2391	7
31	Matthew Wadsworth	ENG	2298	7
32	Johannes Haug	NOR	2328	7
33	Sebastian Halfhide	NED	2253	7
34	Justin Tan	AUS	2462	7
35	Jonas Bjerre	DEN	2330	7
36	Clemens Rietze	GER	2343	7
433 players, 10 rounds				



41...♔g5! Preventing mate and taking over the attack. At this point the game was adjourned.

42.♖b1 The sealed move. White

resigned without resuming play. After 42...♖cc2 he would have to give his queen to prevent mate. The resulting endgame is utterly hopeless.

■ ■ ■

The solutions to the problems are as follows:

1. Timman-Haldorsen

The retreat 30...♕a6 fails to 31.♖d6 ♕c8 32.♖g6!, and Black will be mated. The white major pieces are cooperating optimally.

2. Westerinen-Larsen

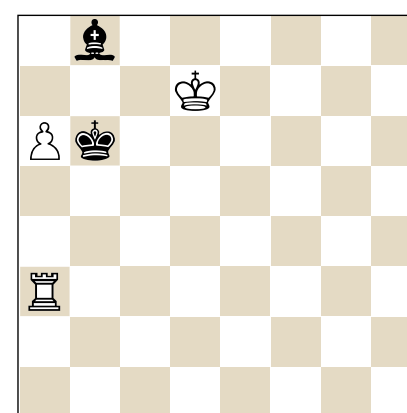
The obvious reply is 26...♘e6, but then White has the strong parry 27.♘f6!. Therefore Larsen played 26...f5! 27.gxf5, and only now 27...♘e6!, with a winning advantage. A study-like turn.

3. Larsen-Miles

It goes without saying that White starts with **57.♖a3**.

Black, however, has a plan: he wants to take his king to a7, after which he would have a theoretically drawn position. Larsen managed to thwart this plan. There followed:

57...♔a7 58.♔e6 ♔b6 59.♔d7 ♖b8



At this point, Miles came up to me and said: 'I hope I have calculated everything well and will finally escape with a draw.'

But Larsen had looked further:

60.a7!

And Black resigned. After 60...♔xa7 61.♔c8! he will lose the bishop. This is a well-known study motif. ■

Eric Hansen

CURRENT ELO: 2629

DATE OF BIRTH: May 24, 1992

PLACE OF BIRTH: Irvine, California, USA

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Montreal, Canada



What is your favourite city?

Barcelona.

What was the last great meal you had?

Lots of tapas and sangria with my Spanish team from Oviedo.

What drink brings a smile to your face?

A Jägerbomb!

Which book would you give to a dear friend?

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley.

What book is currently on your bedside table?

Elon Musk's biography by Ashlee Vance.

What is your all-time favourite movie?

The Bourne Identity.

And your favourite TV series?

Spartacus. But a special shout-out to *Trailer Park Boys* from Canada.

Do you have a favourite actor?

Daniel Day-Lewis.

And a favourite actress?

Natalie Portman.

What music are you currently listening to?

Techno by a DJ named Joseph Capriati.

Is there a work of art that moves you?

Not particularly. I should probably expand my knowledge...

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?

I never really had a favourite, but I can say that the games of Michael Adams had the most influence on me.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?

I didn't start reading books until after I became a Grandmaster.

What was your best result ever?

One time I scored a 2900 performance in an international Open in Panama. However, I take much more pride in helping Canada to its best ever result last year in Baku by scoring 9/11.

And the best game you played?

I am quite happy with my recent game against Mikhail Antipov from the Spanish Team Championships.

What is your favourite square?

Don't have one!

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?

I was mesmerized by Anderssen's two most famous games when I was starting in chess. However, I distinctively remember the final round of the 2013 London Candidates as the most exciting round I've ever watched.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?

Too many to name. 😊

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?

Analytical skills.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or?

Instagram, since you didn't list Tinder.

How many friends do you have on Facebook?

About 650. I am fairly bored of Facebook these days, though.

What is your life motto?

I am still figuring it out!

When was the last time you cried?

At a funeral for a family member.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?

A military commander in Roman times!

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?

Kobe Bryant, Richard Branson and Leonardo DiCaprio. If allowed I would bring Emma Watson as my date.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?

I am very grateful to all the people who encouraged me to take chess seriously.

Is there something you'd love to learn?

Yes! I'd like to learn how to cook well.

Where is your favourite place in the world?

I've enjoyed Iceland immensely every time I have been there.

What is your greatest fear?

Not achieving my potential.

How do you relax?

Usually by going to the gym or watching a TV show.

What does it mean to be a chess player?

In Canada it means very little. I am hoping to change that.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?

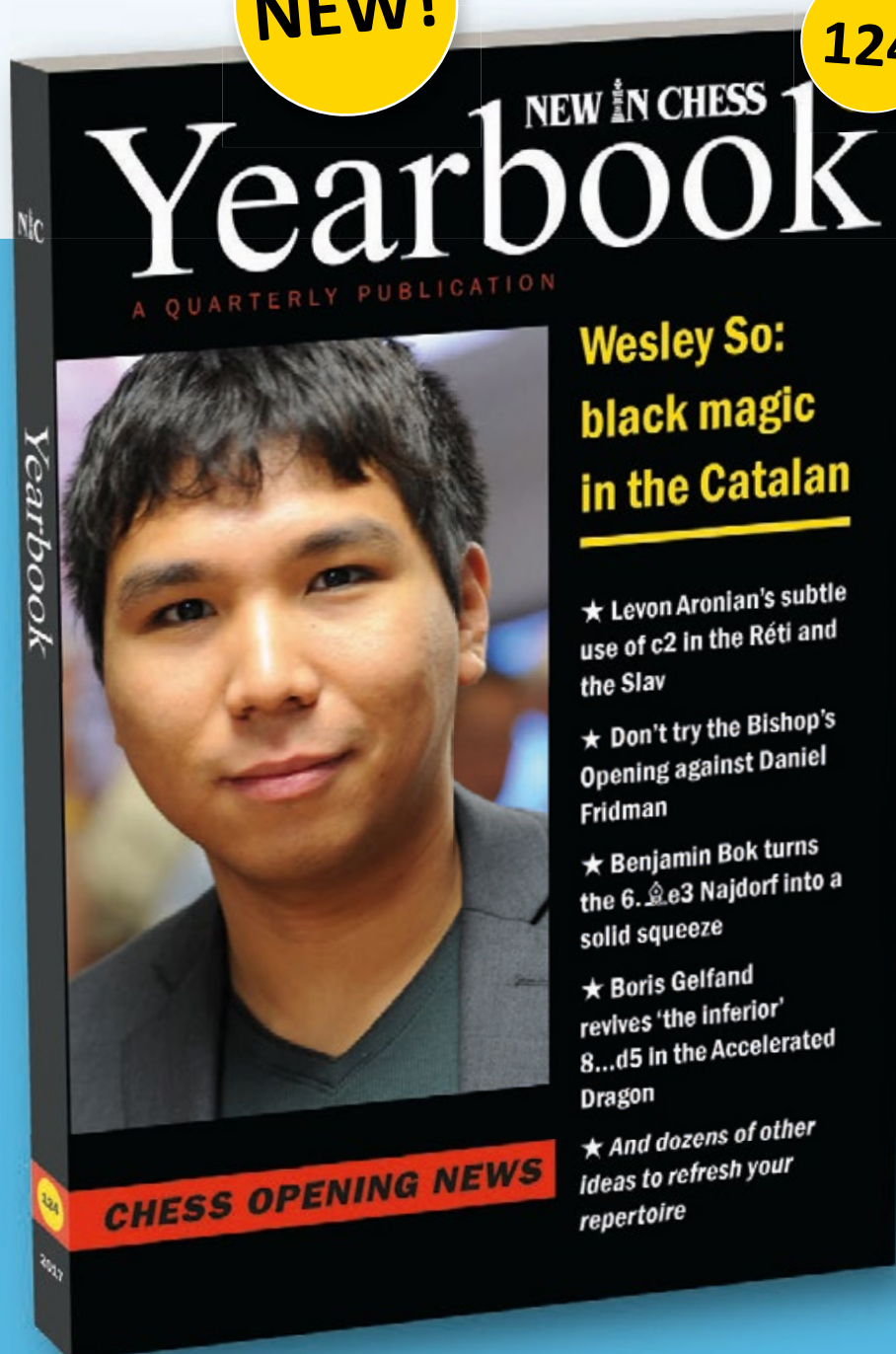
'I want to learn how to play chess' – Kim Kardashian.

“There is something about nearly every opening one can think of.”

British Chess Magazine

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With answers to urgent questions such as:

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- With what surprise in the Short Variation of the Caro-Kann did Richard Rapport give Pentala Harikrishna a hard time?
- Where should White put his queen's knight in the Italian?
- Why is Evgeny Tomashevsky so successful with 6. ♖c4 in the Symmetrical English?
- How does Wesley So deal with Black's structure problems in the Open Catalan?
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